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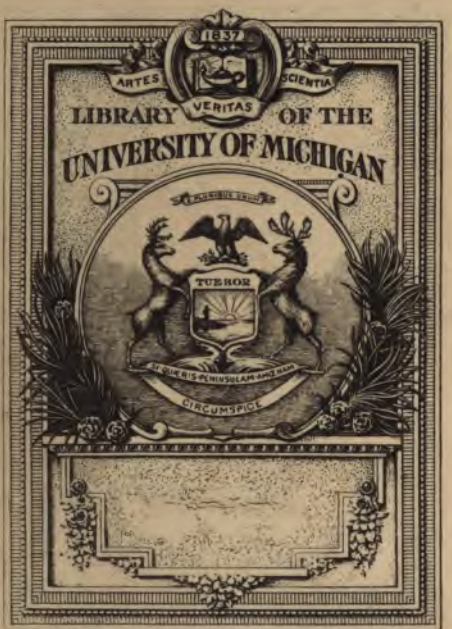
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CHRISTIANITY AS AN IDEAL

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BY

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AUTHOR OF 'THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM'
AND 'AN OLD KIRK CHRONICLE'

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
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Philosophy
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PREFACE.

THIS is not a volume of sermons. The essays which it contains are neither in matter nor in manner suited for the pulpit. They represent the continuation of a line of thought attempted some years ago in a previous volume ('The Gospel of the Kingdom;' Thin, 1892), as a contribution towards a liberal Theology.

P. H. W.

THE MANSE, WHITEKIRK,
February 1900.

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I

THE IDEAL POSTULATED

I.

The Ideal Postulated.

ALL our relations with the world already presuppose some mental attitude on our part toward it. Our attitude may be conscious or as frequently unconscious, but we can never be wholly inactive in the presence of anything; and some mental activity or reaction on our part must always be presupposed. Our mind does not merely receive impressions from without; nor does the world merely write upon our mind what it pleases. Even in the most external of all our relations with the world, that of an almost unconscious observation of nature, there is yet implied, if we analyse our relation, the attitude of contrast and comparison between nature and self. This attitude is so habitual that it may

become an almost unconscious one, but this reciprocal relation of world and self is already presupposed in it. It is the world as we see it; it is nature for us; our scene, our impression of beauty or power. We do not all see the same things in the same proportions or aspects, and no two observers describe the same scene in the same way. The impressions conveyed to different people by the same scene or event are often totally distinct; and thoughts arise and characters are affected according to laws which can receive no explanation from external conditions. This variety of impression presupposes a conscious individual Self, to which everything seen is relative; presupposes a rational being, by whom everything is interpreted: that is, it involves the modification of all impressions by thought.

When we speak of a definite conscious observation of nature, such as Art may make, we find this active attitude of the mind more evidently presupposed. An artist cannot simply 'copy' nature, even if he would. For one reason at least, because it is impos-

sible for him to represent all that he sees in anything, or with the same accuracy; he represents only part of what he sees. But this already implies selection, which is an act of the mind. For it is his own selection of what seems to him in the scene before him important or unimportant, of what seems to him to be characteristic or expressive. This relation of the mind to nature in the work of an artist is the necessity of his physical limitations; but, even apart from this mechanical necessity for thought, anything that is called Art must be in its highest form the expression of the mental attitude of the artist. Its characteristic is mental, not only observational; it is the impression that nature makes on his mind, his interpretation of the relation in which man stands to nature, not simply nature as his eyes see her but as his mind understands her. Hence the ever-varying conception of the ideal of art in different times and nations, and the schools in which it is expressed; for the mind of man will always see nature according to his own individual character. But hence also the

permanent standard for the ideal of art: that it must express thought. For in its progress it must reveal itself as a form of development in harmony with the universal reason. Art cannot be imitation, and dare not be fancy. For even if a man were able to represent anything exactly as it appears, it would not be art; for no mere transcription of natural objects is art. And, at the other extreme, a merely fantastic arrangement of colour cannot be called artistic. It is always implied that art, whether as a transcription of nature or as a work of the imagination, has rational elements in it, and seeks only a reality which is consistent with reason.

In the same way, our relation to the world in the acquisition of Knowledge and the gradual building up of experience is modified from within as well as from without. For knowledge and experience both imply as the first condition of their existence the continual relating of thoughts or objects together; and, if either objects or thoughts are to be related into any available combination, there must be some previous prin-

ciple of unity and some permanent abiding centre to which all can stand in appropriate relation. Knowledge implies some power or faculty which can realise impressions both as separate in themselves, and yet at the same time bound together in a continuous order. You cannot name anything in a successive progress 'this,' without already implying that it has been held and compared with some 'that'; and this is the work of the mind. To name anything an 'object' is already to have the underlying and permanent idea of a 'subject,' with which you have compared it and from which you have mentally (however habitually) separated it. Until impressions or thoughts or feelings can so be at the same time received separately, and yet held together in the mind for comparison, both knowledge and experience are impossible. For nothing can be known or learned until the conscious permanent self is postulated as the point of combination for the momentary comparison of all passing impressions, or as the abiding centre through life round which all the events of succeeding

years are gathered. You cannot know anything until you have postulated that which is the necessary ground of all knowledge—namely, a centre for comparison and relation, a combining element in all experience. Observation or education is alike impossible without some abiding self-conscious principle in us to relate and bind together the impressions of a moment, or the memories of a lifetime. We may, indeed, begin life without prejudice, but we cannot begin it without postulate; for without an active and orderly mind nothing could be apprehended or retained in an orderly way, or put together in such a form that education and progress might be possible. And this priority of thought must be postulated in all our relations with the world; thought is at the same time beyond both proof and denial. It is the ground of all else; there is no getting below the presupposition of self-consciousness; there is no process by which we can prove to ourselves the origin of thought. It must be, or nothing else can be. It is ultimate and final, and presupposed in all

attempts to prove it. For you cannot prove the presence of thought but by reasoning, which is itself the outcome of thought; and you cannot deny the priority of thought, since in the very argument of your denial you are still forced to make use of terms and processes which thought alone can supply.

Science, indeed, is fond of making the claim that she at least uses no presuppositions, and in all her investigations approaches nature only to receive, not to give. But, apart from the fact that the function of reason is never a mere passive one, and that all investigation implies an act of relation and comparison by the mind, it is not difficult to show that science also postulates much before her work is possible. For all her investigations are in search of law and order, and therefore can only proceed on the assumption that there is law and order in the world to be investigated; that the world, indeed, is order; is a cosmos and not a chaos. Science in its own designation of itself as an ordered system of knowledge would be an impossible con-

ception, and could never have arisen in the mind, had there not been postulated in the same mind some rational order and unity. It is this permanent unity of the self-conscious mind within which projects itself as the only possible ideal of the world without, and conceives the universe, as the mind can only conceive it, as an ordered system. Had there been no sense of unity in the self-consciousness of man, there had been no ideal of unity in the universe, or of any system of science.

For even if the world were a chaos, it could not be known to be a chaos, except as it had been contrasted with the orderly reason of man; for were all chaos, chaos by itself would suggest nothing, not even confusion. Were there, then, no postulate of reason that the universe is a rational system, science would be non-existent; for she would have neither aim nor inspiration for her work. But the idea of a universal order was postulated for the external world as a necessity of thought in the inner world, and then science sprang into being; and her victorious progress has been but the gradual vindication of this postulate,

without which for its foundation there had been no progress conceivable. This has been the great charter of her liberty; for she has advanced fearlessly and investigated hopefully only because she has had faith in this underlying order and unity in the world. And all her discoveries, as they one by one vindicate her faith, become assured to her now in that right as an inalienable heritage, and as they have been gained by science in right of reason they have been gained for ever. For her discoveries have been stamped by reason as belonging to an ordered universe, and have been gathered into that accumulation of rational treasures which science in the service of thought has patiently secured. In her unremitting labours science is but rescuing for mankind those scattered portions of the intelligible universe which as yet have come within her reach; her work is permanent only because these increasing tokens combine to testify to the unity of one ordered system, and her reward will be to find at last this unity extending through all the world, until nothing remains separate and unexplained. But the

foundation of her work and method is an ideal of reason: that the universe is a rational unity. And the goal now looked forward to by science, and which she is tempted to regard rather as the final result of many scientific experiments, has in reality been presupposed by thought at the beginning; for science approaches the universe at first only because she believes that the universe will yield to reason, and that there will be found a continuity of principle between the rational and natural worlds.

This is only saying in another way that science is not complete in itself, but requires to postulate an ideal from the sphere of metaphysics before it can start to its work. For science alone could but explain the parts and contrivances of the world, not the world as a whole: the conception of a unity underneath the parts and contrivances of nature is the ideal of thought. If the work of science could finally be justified by science, it could only be when this ideal of reason with which she started had been proved by her discoveries to be true, and the law and method of the world

established by experiment. But this is an infinite and impossible task: science cannot justify her faith. The justification of the truth of this ideal which she took for her guidance is already determined in this, apart from all scientific corroboration, that the conception of this world-unity is postulated beforehand by philosophy as the essential and necessary condition of any explanation of the world whatever. And it is in the demonstration of the necessity of this postulate, of this priority of thought in all endeavours to explain the world, that philosophy claims to be the First Science, the science of sciences: for her ideal — namely, the final unity of all for thought—is the creative spirit of all investigation, and the ultimate reconciliation of all the scattered experiments of science. The truth of philosophy is more and more justified in the achievements of science and art; and her ideal remains the necessity of thought common to all forms of intelligent life.

It is vain to plead that Religion occupies a special and separate field in this respect, and can exist apart from this central truth, which

is the postulate of philosophy and reason. It has been often attempted to dignify and isolate religion on the ground of revelation—on the ground that the truth of revelation is beyond the reason of man. This, indeed, confers an isolation on religion which is not easily broken through; for there can come no living truth to man from any religion which it is beyond the reason of man to understand. What man as a rational being cannot understand cannot be to him any revelation; for such a revelation cannot even be communicated to him, much less find a natural place in his life. In such a claim religion can only take her stand on the view that man has a set of separate faculties, to one of which reason may appeal and to another revelation; and that in life he may be moved now by one, now by the other. But man has not such a divided nature, nor can reason and revelation be accommodated in separate mental compartments. The essential characteristic of man is, that he is in his whole nature a rational being; and to whatever extent he may be rational he is so at least through and through. Such a

claim to supremacy, therefore, on the part of religion as being separate from reason, leaves her solitary in the universe. Such a claim returns upon herself, and confers the fatal isolation of being alone irrational.

Religion, like every other aim of human life, must start from the common postulate of reason—namely, that there is a final unity, a continuity of one principle throughout the universe, and a rational relation between the outer and inner worlds. Without this reciprocal relation between the worlds of thought and reality postulated beforehand religion will fail in the end. For the continuity of the two worlds, the natural and the spiritual, and the faith that both are the expression of one ultimate unity, and that any separation between them is but the temporary illusion of our own limitations, this is the ideal of religion, as it is the ideal of art, and of science, and of philosophy. It is the same ideal which appeals to us in them all, though in different ways; it 'works out' to different results, but it is the same ultimate truth, and the one necessary truth for all

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comprehension of the world or of life. The aim of religion, as of philosophy, is the ultimate reconciliation of all things in God; and she must believe that reconciliation to be possible, or she has no ground to start from. If she is content to preach a faith which is irrational, which proclaims a dualism in the universe to begin with, she will have only a dualism to end with. For she cannot hope by any external arrangement, or even by calling in a fiat of divinity, ever afterwards to reconcile into harmony things that are already taken for granted as opposed by nature.

Nor is this a postulate of convenience only, to avoid the difficulties that naturally beset the explanation of religion; but it is a postulate of necessity. It may be called an unproved hypothesis, but only in name; for it is the one great hypothesis of all life and thought, without which these are not conceivable. It is a hypothesis which is verified in the very statement of it; for its necessity is its verification. As we cannot reason about thought till we have postulated thought, so we cannot speak about religion till we have postu-

lated the possibility of a final unity. It is the work of philosophy to show how the mind is forced by thought to its postulate of a rational unity; and the task of religion would be to justify faith when faith seizes this as a conviction of the heart. The work of philosophy ends, through the reasoned development and vindication of her postulate, in the final unity of all in God. But faith, instead of justifying herself by argument, begins just at this point where the reasoning of philosophy ends; for she finds already given in the heart this ideal of the necessity of ultimate unity, towards which philosophy is striving, and she seizes at one step, as a belief, what thought has laboriously toiled to prove. What to faith, therefore, is an immediate unity, must to philosophy be mediated through thought. Where the Christian faith differs from reason as to the ultimate unity in the world is not in the nature of the truth which she believes, but only in the fact that she is content not to prove the necessity of the postulate with which she starts: it remains a matter of faith to the end; and she is satisfied to bridge by aid of

immediate feeling the gulf which philosophy finds impassable except to thought.

Religion reaches her kingdom by faith in that postulate which she has made, and is not troubled to justify either its reasonableness or its necessity. But the kingdom which she reaches is the same as that of philosophy; for the truth of faith is only the same truth implicit, which in philosophy becomes explicit. The final unity is already in the soul by faith, and waits to be examined and justified by thought. The end, indeed, is reached without the processes of thought; but the end is the same, and can submit to the analysis of thought. The ideal postulated by faith is the ideal required by thought; and the unity which the heart was quick to recognise is the same which the mind in slow analysis confirms. Faith does not remain apart in a kingdom of her own, defying reason and claiming to be justified to feeling alone; she takes her place in the universal kingdom of reason without fear, and is willing to leave her justification to thought as sure. She does not claim to have any peculiar right or any private sphere; her

kingdom is but part of the universal kingdom of God, and therefore can be hers only in such a way as will at last harmonise with the universal kingdom and accord with the divine reason, not in one, but in all its forms of expression. It is with the religious kingdom as with all the other kingdoms—of science, or art, or philosophy: he that entereth not in by the door, the same is a thief and a robber. 'The kingdom that I seek is Thine, so let the way to it be Thine.'

The position of religion here is not unlike that of poetry. Poetry, like religion, starts with a view of life which demands a unity among all its contradictions, a deeper unity than the circumstances of life to the ordinary observer seem to warrant. But, without this postulate of some latent unity and possible reconciliation in the apparent contradictions and even tragedies of life, the spirit of poetry would be lost. For poetry essays not a mere narrative of life, but its interpretation; or at least such a narrative of life as implies and suggests its own interpretation from within. The poet is a man of like passions

with ourselves and subject to the same conditions of life, yet his faith in an ideal unity can transcend and reconcile these; conceiving such a poetic synthesis of life that the reconciliation which he sets forth carries with it the sense of being already implied in the conditions, and inevitable in its issue.

This is the attitude which is characteristic also of the preacher. The preacher is a poet. He takes the ideal unity of faith as the only possibility of interpreting the conditions of life, and he presents this final reconciliation of its apparent contradictions as the strength, the hope, the consolation of men. In full knowledge of all the realities of life he thus seeks to transform them, not to deny or despise them. He persuades men that these conditions can be transformed through faith in this underlying spiritual unity; and exalts them to the conviction that already all things are reconciled and explained in the purpose of God, and ultimately shall be found reconciled in man's experience also, if only he can see them in the light of God and as part of the development of the divine purpose. This

is the message of the preacher; and it imparts the power which an ideal view of life always confers, by explaining life from within, as containing in itself the latent spiritual ideal, whose development is to be its salvation. But, as such an ideal view of life is possible only when we grant some divine spirit in man, the conviction of this ideal becomes to man the conviction of God working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure, and perfecting that ideal in him which His spirit has so begun. The preacher therefore has few external standards for the religious life, and few separate truths which he can enunciate or defend one by one; for these are all carried forward and merged in the full-orbed thought of life as faith conceives it, life as it is in the ideal, life as it is in God. He knows but one truth, not many: the truth which reconciles life unto itself by reconciling it unto God; the truth which brings human life into the light of the eternal, and in that light makes men see light clearly. He presents to the heart of man not only a spiritual ideal of life, but also this ideal as

leavening life even under and through its own natural conditions. He conceives salvation not as a violent separation from life, but rather as an entrance by faith into the great divine movement and purpose which are being fulfilled everywhere, but which in the heart of man are being consciously fulfilled. The preacher identifies himself with the ideal, and so meets and explains the world.

But though a poetic unity or unity of faith suffices for the view and work of the preacher, and for the heart of the believer, it cannot remain as the ultimate expression of the truth of religion for the reason of man. When the truth of religion becomes the subject of thought, then religion must be justified as containing a truth which appeals to reason as well, and must be shown to be more than an ideal sentiment, more than a subjective feeling. This grasp of the truth is justified in the heart of the individual by faith, in believer and preacher alike; but it must submit to the demand to be justified also as an objective truth; to be justified only if the ideal which faith has seized should prove

in the end a solution of life satisfactory to thought. Religion is content to satisfy faith alone, to satisfy only the subjective element in human nature; but religion at the same time implies, even unconsciously, a link with a universal movement of thought underlying the presupposition which faith has made. Religion must be found to contain and explain the problems of life not under the exaltation of faith only, but in such a way as to be capable of making an appeal also to some rational process which will substantiate its truth. If the problems of life and the world and providence are to be reconciled and united permanently in religion for man, it must be not only by the immediate action of pious feeling which lifts man above them, but also by this ideal of faith proving itself ultimately to be a servant of universal thought. The appeal of the preacher may begin and end with faith or feeling; but the appeal he makes in the name of faith must be implicitly true in the name of thought, and thus become a new and living way to the truth.

In considering the necessity of faith's pos-

tulate, namely, the presence of an essential unity through the natural and spiritual worlds, the harmony of the outer and inner, the reconciliation of life and providence from within and not from without, we must remember that this is not one truth of religion among many, a truth which might be taken up or abandoned while other truths were saved. This is the one and only truth, alike of faith and of philosophy, alike of religion and of reason; although it is expressed in the form that the religious consciousness requires. It is the one postulate of all: this demand for an essential and all-embracing unity in the universe; a continuity of one principle in all forms of life; an end and aim in the development of which all things at last will be reconciled, and in which alone they will attain their true life and completion. It is a truth, so far as concerns religion, which cannot be deduced from any other truths outside of it, for it is itself the prius of all other religious truths. It depends on God alone. For the final truth which it seeks is, God in the world: in the world, and not outside of it.

Such a truth cannot be proved from anything beyond itself, but only from the necessity of having God in the world, and from the futility of all life and religion if God be not there. It is useless for us to prove that God has planned the world and left it; or that God overlooks the world and waits. If God be not in the world as the divine principle of an organic unity, He is for religion nowhere. Men have sometimes tried to prove by a process of reasoning that there is a God; but the only difficulty which religion recognises is, to prove that there is not a God. The proof of religion really lies within itself, not only in the power of, but the necessity for, man to postulate an ideal of faith. This necessity itself proves that we live and move and have our being in God, because by our very nature we postulate Him as the beginning and end of all things, and as the one spirit of unity and of final reconciliation through all. Had we hope only in such a world as we ourselves could arrange, we would be of all men most miserable. It is the ideal that saves us. It is the necessity of the ideal, and our power to conceive it,

mouth. But this is practically the only form of 'proof' which the religious ideal will admit. We are not here in the logical or scientific sphere, but in the spiritual; we must depend on other proofs therefore than either science or logic cares to regard. Religion cannot be a deduction from anything outside of itself: it stands or falls in its own right. And its right lies in its value—an intrinsic and essential value which we expressly declare to be infinite, not comparable with anything finite, worldly, or human. And it is in thus declaring it to be infinite, not comparable with anything finite, that we declare it also to be spiritual and divine, a thing in its own right, a thing by itself; God in us. This separate and exclusive value which we place on our ideals, this absolute right which we grant them, this is their proof.

Proof of our ideals therefore can only mean their power of self-justification. And this will lie, so far as the ideals of religion are concerned, in the examination of life under its religious aspects till we find that everywhere those ideals are presupposed, or that

without them life and all its search for unity would ever remain incomplete, but a thing of shreds and patches. If this should prove to be so, then we must acknowledge that their justification lies really in their value. Since thought and faith alike demand that life and the world should be held together in some coherence and purpose and order; that they should have some reliable law of unity from within, and not merely be bound together from without; that they should show as the law of their necessity one which reveals itself as a law of organic growth in development, and not merely the swing of chance or the mechanical rule of fate;—since both faith and reason demand this as the necessary prius of all else, if our ideals alone should seem to afford it, there is no need for other proof. It is as the counterpart and completion of the rational unity in ourselves that a rational unity must be conceived and postulated in the universe; and this postulate of reason becomes its own proof. The postulate of faith is the same, only from a different point

of view; for faith begins where philosophy ends, in God. But the justification of her ideal is also the same: for she is justified, because she does not seek to set aside, but rather to take up, the conditions of life, and overcoming and reconciling all their contradictions in God, satisfying the heart that all things in the outer and inner worlds work together and work together for good, she establishes righteousness on this ground,—the conviction that our ideal standards of moral life are reliable, and form a part in the development of the divine purpose.

It is thus that the religious ideal becomes its own justification: by satisfying the demands of a life which does not seek to escape from its conditions in the world-order, but which without it in the midst of these conditions could never reach satisfaction; for by transforming the contradictions and transcending the limitations of the world of time, it satisfies the demands of life not with some arrangement from without, but by revealing in them as they are an inner unity and an implicit spirituality. It traces in

its silent argument a complete and organic development, for the original ideal expands from within and realises itself in all the forms of life and thought by which it is met or opposed, until gradually it reconciles all its own world unto itself. The ideal of religion is justified by this power of adaptation to the world, and becomes an inspiration in its fearless demand to be brought into contact with it. In the world it will have tribulation, but is of good cheer for it has overcome the world ere it meets it. It is not a vision or a dream or an abstract conception of the mind, but a thought which forms itself in life and realises itself in activity. This is its guarantee, that it represents the onward movement of a spiritual development in the world as it is, the promise of a victory for the moral elements which actual life contains.

Here an intellectual logic must give way to an organic logic: that is, to a progress of thought which is not a syllogistic proof, but which reveals its truth in the necessity of its presence for the development of human life,

one under which alone human life can become consistent and complete. This is the only verification of a spiritual truth: that it is organically a necessity of life, and that it finds in life nothing that is finally opposed to it, but rather that it fulfils itself and its purpose in continually adapting itself to all apparent contradictions. The spiritual ideal is true in that it leaves nothing outside of its influence, and needs no external aid for its growth: from within it develops its own thought by ever renewed contact with the relations of life. This is the logic of spirit: an organic development. It is a growth in which the branches exist only in so far as they are one with the vine, and the vine is a tree only through the branches. This parable of essential interdependence is the final truth of spirit, and is the parable of the gradual development of the spiritual ideal in its necessary bondage to the conditions of the world.

II

THE IDEAL IN BONDAGE

II.

The Ideal in Bondage.

DISCONTENT with things as they are is the presence of the ideal in bondage, and at the same time the token of its relation to reality. The ideal of man's religion is no mere dream or creation of the fancy, or something which feels none of the limitations of earth to its fulfilment; for it has no unsubstantial perfection in itself apart, but that perfection only which is concerned with the realities of life. The spirit of the ideal, indeed, can only be described as one of toil and unrest, a spirit which groans being in bondage, a spirit which travails in pain. It arises in man not because he has a nature which can turn from the real and find rest in contemplating the ideal, which can put aside the pressure of life and retire to

the solace of religion. Rather the character of man's ideal is revealed just in this, that it knows itself only in relation with the world, and in its strivings to come to fulfilment there. It is known to be real, it is known for what it is, in the agony of soul it produces in man through the endless and almost unavailing attempts he renews in the world on its behalf and under its inspiration. It is not an ideal that dwells only in heaven, mystic, wonderful; but an ideal that ceaselessly strives in man on the earth, to claim through him possession of the world.

That it is set in conditions here in which it fails to realise itself, is to say that these very limitations of the actual are the conditions and sphere in which alone it recognises itself, and finds the truth and reality of its aim; for though the limitations of this world are too strong for its complete realisation here, yet it is in the actual only that the ideal ever comes to its kingdom. There is an eternal continuity between the world of the ideal and the world of the real, for they are but two expressions of the one spirit, and neither is

complete in itself, or indeed recognisable or possible without the other. The ideal has no existence for man except as he has learned to conceive it in the limitations of the actual and the present. It is no unreal abstraction either of feeling or of thought, but the actual tumult of a soul striving for satisfaction and freedom in a world of time and space, and recognising in this sense of struggle and limitation the first token of its reality. The ideal is not a phantasm from some happy region brought into the world from without, or a poetic vision set up by a special creation for men to admire: the ideal is the ideal world, the ideal self; things not indeed as they are, but the same things as they ought to be. The world affords its own inspiration, self its own ideal, in spite of both being material and limited; for both are at the same time spiritual, though under bondage to the present and material. The ideal lies in the possibilities of these, or it lies nowhere. There is indeed a pattern on the Mount; but it is only the ideal pattern of an actual world and a real humanity, which are essentially spiritual in themselves. It

cannot be created for them or imposed upon them from without; it is the necessity of thought, which must recognise the ideal in the universe as it is.

Discontent with things as they are is in reality more the sign of religion than is rest. For it may be said without any desire to be contradictory that man cannot have rest except in discontent. Divine discontent means in the end a divine ideal; and only in the consciousness of the ideal is rest to be found. That the ideal seems impossible, seems unattainable, is the cause of discontent; but that the ideal is ever there, is the source of peace. It is a peace, however, which does not fold its hands, but which expresses itself only in the restlessness of confident exertion, in the unceasing renewal of an assured progress. Discontent with things as they are, even with the results of our best efforts, is the only form that the ideal can take. For if the satisfaction of life lie partly in what has been done, it is only because this is an earnest of what is yet to be done, of what the ideal yet demands. Spiritual life can

take no form but that of struggle. Religion brings not peace, but a sword; and her ideal has no fascination for those who are at ease in Zion, but for those only who have put on the armour of light. To conceive the ideal is to bring forth pain. Yet an ideal has always been the inspiration which religion affords, and an ideal is the inspiration which humanity cares to follow. For men are inspired not by what is easy, but by what is difficult; and they are moved not by the thought of what they can do, but rather by the vision of what remains to be done. Humanity trusts not in the strength which the natural man possesses, but in that which the ideal will continually lend afresh to faith, and which it will perfect even in nature's weakness: for the true conception of the strength which the ideal inspires is, that nothing is impossible to him who believeth. Nor does this inspiration from the ideal depend on individual success or past fulfilment; here the ideal is for humanity ever unfulfilled, and yet the inspiration continues. The best explanation is, that it is part of our life.

And not only part of our life, but the true part, the spiritual part, which by the infinite value of its presence is the guarantee for the certainty of its gradual triumph; for the ideal speaks not first of ourselves or of our own day, rather of the great world-order of which we are but a part and in whose progress we share. The ideal slowly realises itself in history and in the practical development of the universal reason in the world; but the glory of man still remains more in the consciousness of the ideal than in its partial fulfilment.

The chief glory of man lies not in what he has attained, but in this consciousness of what he has not attained. For what he has attained in all spheres of national history and mental progress has been attained only in the continual pursuit of that which is unattainable. It is that which man has never reached which has always been the inspiration of what he has accomplished; and therefore all that he has done, however perfect in itself it may appear, bears in his mind the stamp of imperfection: if it is to him the

earnest, it is also but the shadow, of those things that are to come. Man is still reaching forward to an ideal that seems to recede as he approaches nearer; and if the things he has already reached are the inspiring token of what he may attain, they are nevertheless the ever-present reminder that he has not yet attained or is yet perfect. Man goes forth on his world-mission not knowing whither he goeth, but called irresistibly by an inspiration, by an ideal; he is a pilgrim in a land of promise, for he never finds an abiding city. It is true that he builds many an altar by the way, and sets up many an Ebenezer, saying, 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped'; but these are only momentary rests and points of view, for he looks for a city not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God. This inspired description of man's history as a pilgrimage, as a journey he feels called to take not knowing whither he goeth, is very characteristic of his spirit; for he goes under the compulsion of an ideal whose fulfilment he cannot foresee or almost forecast. It is his native faith in the ideal

which is the only guide, and the only comfort, he has; for discontent is his portion in pursuit of it, and a sense of never attaining rest.

The sense of limitation in all its forms, of time, and pain, and sin, and death, which is common to humanity is so to the ideal. We cannot conceive such limitations away in any world at all in which men are to be as human nature now is. It is in vain to speculate as to whether this is the best of all possible worlds, or whether some other form of world might not have been better. There is only one answer to such speculations, and that is, that they are impossible and contradictory. We cannot conceive various ideals for the world to exist, from amongst which the Creator could select. There could not be an alternative in the mind of God as to the plan of the universe, there could not be hesitation; for the universe must be taken as the necessary expression of the divine mind which altereth not, and it is what it is because it could not be otherwise. To conceive that it might have

been otherwise, and that points here and there might have been better according to some other scheme, or that they will be checked or restrained by the divine power, or finally cast out and destroyed, is to lose all reliance on the divine character, and to imagine that it can be in doubt as to different aims, and even feel regret for work it has done. But the ideal in the divine mind knows no alternatives, and is swayed by no rival schemes; it is ruled only by the necessity of its own nature, and the universe is the expression of that necessity.

Such necessity in God, of course, is freedom; for it is only another name for a character perfect and complete in itself, which is moved forward in its own course from within and not from without: but the perfection of God's character implies that this is the only possible universe, that it not only contains the divine reason within it but is the divine reason, and therefore contains also implicit as its ideal a reconciliation with God. The universe is subject to limitations, for it is not purely spirit; but if it be the expression of

the character of God, then these cannot be permanent limitations to the action of His spirit, but rather are to be regarded as the possible and final means of furthering it. It is not those who believe in the spirituality of the universe who are troubled by its necessary limitations, but those only who in starting with a dualism in the world find difficulty in explaining them away. For unless we conceive of everything as the expression of the continuity of the divine reason throughout the whole universe, and so becoming its necessary channel, we shall reach contradictions in the universe which not only cannot be solved, but which reduce our minds to doubt and our faith to denial. The ideal is subjected, it is true, but it is subjected in hope: not in the hope of some divine interference, but in the hope of its own spiritual nature and its own organic growth. And if this hope and ideal of a final unity of all be taken away, then the world is subjected beyond salvation.

But we may go further, and say that it would wrong the infinite spirit in man were

we to claim for it as its ideal a hope of freedom from limitation, rather than a sense of subjection. For the true nature of that infinite spirit can only be revealed to him as he finds himself opposed and limited from without—as he finds the world apparently too small, and nature insufficient for his wants. For the true conception of the infinite is not that of a spirit which by its nature can neither know nor feel a limit; but rather that of a spirit which, finding everywhere limits to its own development and expansion, can yet overcome all limits, and even find them means to its best life. It is not a spirit which is self-contained and self-satisfied, a separate existence knowing nothing but itself, and without variety and difference included in its life. We detract from the divine perfection when we take away, as a token of imperfection, the knowledge of limitation and of difference within its own infinite spirit. For if we insist on this artificial sense of freedom from limitation, and this absolute self-identity without variety or difference, then though the infinite spirit contains within

itself all that is, yet all that it contains has lost its manifold character, all its contents are reduced to absolute and empty similarity, and the Infinite becomes but a name for endless comprehension with no character. There can be no character in mere identity, but only in the reconciliation of varying and even opposing attributes and tendencies. If the Infinite can know no difference or variety within itself, then everything that is taken up into its life must lose its personality; for where there can be no sense of limit, even if the limit be reconciled, there can be no sense of character. Such an Infinite may indeed contain all its children within itself, but only by devouring them.

The Infinite and Divine cannot so be defined in terms of mere capacity, or its desire to contain all and yet remain itself unchanged and uninfluenced by all. It can only be defined in terms of spirit, whose characteristic it is to recognise a limit to itself in every object and personality in nature, and yet to reconcile every such limit to itself without destroying it; even to find something in

every limiting influence capable of being assimilated to itself and of being transformed from a limit into a further enrichment of the spirit's life. For spirit does not extend its own at the expense of any individual character or personality without, but only by enlarging its life in taking up theirs into its own, becoming more rich for all the variety it receives. This is the infinite life of the Divine: that it contains in itself the life of the whole, the life of the world, but is itself conceived as more perfect for all the variety it contains and for all the limitations and differences apparent in the world thus reconciled to itself. The infinite may be spoken of as a body which is perfect only by that which every separate joint and limb supplieth. All the stones harmonised together in the temple of the infinite are individual living stones. If the infinite does not reconcile in its own life all the contradictions in nature and the variety in every human character, which it embraces in its spirit, it can be no true infinite; for had these varieties and limitations to be crushed and destroyed in the presence of the divine

spirit, then it would have to recognise something that was still external to itself, something whose nature was foreign to it and irreconcilable—something, in short, that lay outside of the infinite and divine. And as long as we can suppose anything to exist which the divine spirit cannot receive to itself, and take up to enrich its own life, so long must there be an endless dualism in the universe from which nothing can set us free.

It is, therefore, in so far as man partakes of this divine and infinite nature that his spirit is continually finding limits to its expansion; but also continually finding that these limits and oppositions are not permanent, but in their turn even minister to the life of the spirit which they seemed to oppose. As they are found in themselves to be but another expression of the divine spirit which is in man, so in ministering to the divine spirit in man they are but coming to themselves. For were these limitations which nature and men everywhere oppose to the infinite ideal to be regarded as final and impassable, then we would have a divine spirit

in man with nothing here to satisfy its life, and its interests only in heaven. This would mean that the world which God had created had no essential relation to Him, and existed for no end or good to the spirit of God in man. But in reality it is not so: for the world places no permanent limit to the ideal because the world itself is spiritual, and is therefore but another expression and counterpart of the same spirit that is in man. The outer and the inner worlds are working to the same end, both being the manifestation of the one principle; and the limits, of time and pain and even death itself, imposed by the outer world, are transcended and transformed in the life of the inner world, for they are recognised as belonging to a similar spiritual system. The infinite spirit in man not only accepts them, but learns to work through them, that at last God may be all in all.

But even with this desire to reconcile all things to itself, the spirit of man can never in this present world reach final satisfaction. It is God alone that can do so, for God alone

can take the whole world into His heart. It is our world only so far as we can, like God, sympathise with it all and receive it all. To Him there is in it nothing common or unclean, nothing that cannot find some place and purpose. Wisdom is somewhere justified of everything. Our own life becomes more divine the more we find room in it for the life of nature and the life of others. But we would need all the world reconciled in our heart to make our spiritual life complete, for that is what makes the life of God complete. 'Our personality therefore is not to be regarded as a fixed spiritual quantity,' a determinate portion of the divine spirit assigned us which cannot be increased or diminished, cut off from all others and limited to itself. But it is rather a living and expanding consciousness, which has the power of transcending external limits and finding its own life in all that surrounds it. Our spiritual life cannot be circumscribed at our own will, for it gains continually from its intercourse with others and finds itself infinite in its relations in all directions. This is because it contains the

potentiality of the world in itself, for it contains in itself the infinite spirit.

But while it has the consciousness of being at one with the world in the spirit, yet this infinite relation can never be fully expressed or realised. The limits of time, and the contradictions and disappointments of life, are indeed overcome in thought and faith, but they remain a bondage for ever in practice and attainment. We cannot see all, we cannot know all: and it is only in such final divine knowledge that reconciliation between ourselves and the world could ever be gained. So long as we know only in part, so long will the ideal in man have to wrestle in bondage with the finite conditions of things. But the very sense of bondage and want of attainment is the sign of a spirit beyond these, the sign of protest from a faith which is already victorious in its ideal if not in its actual struggle. For even where the struggle for this knowledge and reconciliation is keenest, where providence touches our own interests and our own home, the complaint of religion is still founded on faith, and not on doubt: 'Lord, if thou hadst

been here, our brother had not died.' This is the struggle of faith, which will not accept defeat even in darkness, the complaint of faith in the name and on behalf of her triumphant ideal. And the reply of Providence to such a complaint is the strengthening of this underlying faith in the divine world-order, and in the final reconciliation and adjustment of all things in God: 'Thy brother shall rise again.'

Job may be taken as the type of the religious ideal in bondage; and his cry, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him,' as the cry of the ideal in mental loneliness, in the struggle of the infinite with its finite conditions. His is a spirit struggling with limitations which the ideal has in faith already transcended, but which it cannot bring to actual reconciliation. It is the cry of one who feels that he has a property in God, a relation with Him which seems to be broken, and yet which he is conscious no break can utterly destroy. This break in his relation with God is the chief element in his pain, but at the same time the consciousness of the pain is the earnest of its removal. The pathos of the tragedy lies in

this, that it is 'a struggle of right with right,' not of right with wrong. The apparent doubt is but the form of a protesting faith; as in the cry of a greater sufferer, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' The problem of Job is, as the problem of the ideal always is, how consistently to reconcile providence and life from within, to have religion fit into life, and not simply be added to it from without. For Job, if God be not at the centre of life he cares not where He be. And the problem of religion can always be reduced to this, to the need of this necessary harmony and continuity between the outer and the inner worlds. Where this continuity seems to be broken, no external arrangements will restore it, and no arguments heal it. Hence the phrasings of Job's friends become futile, and their arguments seem platitudes and commonplaces. Such friends and champions of religion mistake their aim—for logical theories are not the keys which will unlock this problem of the universe. The universe must offer its solution from within, or it remains for ever insoluble. And the element of tragedy in the history of

Job lies here, that he believes in this inner harmony, though he feels that apparently it denies his trust. His protest is not defiance or doubt; it is the expression of his faith against all these apparent contradictions. Job is on God's side in the controversy, and only makes an appeal to God to prove the righteousness of His own rule. He is warring with the right and not with the wrong. In this his spirit rises beyond the limitations which the finite world has laid upon him, and in the end he seems to find that they may truly minister to his spiritual life. For at last, when he completely throws them off as a burden and accepts them for their blessing, reliance and faith gain their victory, and he finds the reconciliation which he seeks by obedience to the divine order, working for the same end both without and within.

This restlessness of the mind in continual struggle and discontent is in reality a token of its strength, though it might easily be mistaken in appearance for weakness. But that the ideal is capable of feeling itself in bondage is the earnest of its final victory; for to know

that it is bound is the first token that it is not content to submit to finite conditions; and to be conscious of an unrealised freedom within shows that it will not accept any one-sided or external freedom from without. It is a mistake to see signs of strength in the intolerant attitude of a mind which defies and despises its external conditions, which tramples the world underfoot, or 'divides it in two with a hatchet.' This is in reality the sign of the weakness and impatience of a mind which is willing to cast away the half of life because it cannot easily understand it, and is weak enough to seek rest in a solution which lies outside its difficulties and not within them.

That the ideal feels itself in bondage, is the gift of the spirit. It only shows that no mind can be conscious of bondage which is not first conscious of freedom, and that it therefore will not recognise the oppositions of this world as final. That the mind feels anything to be a limit, means only that the mind is too strong to rest in it, and is already in the ideal beyond it. The mind acknowledges its blindness in the world, but does not submit to it as

its final state: for to know your blindness is a token of sight. To boast of full sight here would be the confession of blindness; and if we foolishly say we see, then our darkness remaineth. But it is the light and strength of the mind which make it conscious of its present blindness, and therefore for the mind to acknowledge blindness is a guarantee of its sight. It is thus that the final stage of knowledge becomes in a sense religious, for the want of satisfaction here throws the mind back on the ideal. Thus the mind acknowledges that the final step to truth must be made in faith—that in the ideal alone will the last reconciliation of all be found. Knowledge brings us to the gate of truth, but it cannot open the gate: faith alone can enter in. For the faith of man not only believes in an ultimate reconciliation of all things, but even grasps it, though finite knowledge cannot attain it. But it is the strength, not the weakness, of the mind which leads it onward thus to accept at last from faith that ideal unity which it has not reached in knowledge.

It is thus that we escape from Pessimism.

The very discontent of mind which is the characteristic of pessimism becomes our salvation. For it requires a spiritual and infinite consciousness to recognise the finite limits of either the physical or moral worlds, and so to create a discontent. Discontent with things as they are is not a fruit of the natural world, or a sign of the weakness of man's mind; it is the spiritual ideal in bondage, it is the earnest of better things, the voice of a higher calling. We cannot be pessimists except in so far as we are optimists; for the feeling of dissatisfaction with the world as it is implies already the consciousness of some ideal world which would give satisfaction. We must have some infinite standard within for our judgment of the deficiency of the finite which is without; for we know that to the animals the natural and finite life does not of itself suggest any deficiency. In the suggestion of a deficiency we recognise rather the disappointment of some expectation, the breaking of some harmony, the degradation of some ideal. We know that the world is imperfect, only because we already somehow know that the

ideal is complete. We feel the jar of the two worlds, only because some reconciliation between them has in thought been already demanded. But the presence in our mind of this ideal, of this harmony and reconciliation of the two worlds, is the very element and necessity of an optimistic faith. For it is faith in the development of an ideal, which, though it is being inadequately reached and realised, nevertheless exists permanently in our mind, and is the infinite standard with which we compare everything finite. Pessimism is conscious of too much. For to be conscious of the dissatisfaction we feel is already to be beyond it; to realise our bondage is already to be free. The truth which pessimism emphasises is only that the ideal is here in bondage to finite conditions, and that the progress to the absolute is slow, and may be here unattainable. But, that the ideal exists for us is the only reason that we know we have not reached it; and a world which contains an ideal must be a world of reason, and order, and hope.

It is, however, in the moral life that we

gradually become more familiar with the discontent of the ideal in bondage. We are conscious of sin, only because we are in spirit beyond it, because we have a spirit which denies it. Not that we can deny the sin, but we deny its right: 'It is no more I that sin, but sin that dwelleth in me.' It is only because we can make that distinction, the distinction between the ideal self and the actual, that we are conscious of sin. But in this distinction we are already in spirit beyond sin, and at least in the ideal and in faith are passed from death to life, and are made free from the bonds of sin wherein we were held. It is the presence of the moral ideal which makes us conscious of its own limitation in sin; for no limitation would be felt were not the ideal there. Sin lies in want of allegiance to the ideal: in this is its moral delinquency. It is not mere ignorance alone—it is that we come not to the light because our deeds are evil; and in this want of allegiance we are condemned already. It is true that sin is often but some mistaken form of the ideal, a search for it in conditions which can never

supply it, a pursuit of peace in pleasure. But sin is as often a perversion of the ideal, a deliberate preference of the finite over the infinite.

But in whatever form sin appears, the knowledge of sin is only possible because there is first a knowledge of the ideal: it is a sense of limitation, a sense of bondage. It is a condition of life which here can never be actually transcended, any more than final knowledge can ever be gained; but that we recognise the bondage of sin is the proof that we have at least in thought transcended it, and so far are delivered from the body of its death. Indeed such a knowledge of sin bears within itself the solution of sin: for the spirit which is still conscious of the ideal can always return to its allegiance, can indeed never be without this possibility of reconciliation in itself, and at any moment may say, 'I will arise and go to my Father.' The unity is still latent in the discord, the spiritual is but asleep in the natural. It is impossible for a spiritual being to be ever actually 'dead' in trespasses and sins; for, were such an absolute break

between the two worlds possible, he could never either know his sin or be saved from it. The only hope in the moral world is just this, that the spirit of man, the ideal, feels itself ever in bondage, but is never dead. The sinner, while lost in the enjoyment of sin, does not feel this bondage, otherwise he would not enjoy sin. For the time being he is in the enjoyment of a false ideal, a false infinite: the true ideal is forgotten and cast aside. Without the ideal, sin is dead—that is, there is neither consciousness of sin nor of its bitterness. But when the ideal comes again, sin revives, with a consciousness of all its limitation and discontent, of all its bitterness and condemnation; and the ideal which was ordained to life, is found by the sinner to be unto death. But this is the death which leadeth unto life, the darkness before the dawn. We have come to ourselves again in the moral ideal, and in recognising our baseness we know that we are already beyond it.

III

THE MORAL IDEAL

III.

The Moral Ideal.

This return to morality from sin expresses the first definite victory which the ideal gains for man: the victory of the ideal that is latent in his own rational life. It is a victory of the ideal, for it is simply the victory of a man who conceives his life as it ought to be when under the control of reason, for no advantage, other than the satisfaction of his own consciousness, in the full growth of his nature and the realisation of his highest self. As man is essentially and typically a rational being, it is first in the region of a rational life that he recognises his true self, the end for which he was born. Man is moral because he is rational; life becomes moral because that is a necessary form of the ideal as conceived

and ruled by reason. There is no special moral consciousness grafted on to the rational consciousness of man; there is no separate part of his nature which of itself responds to a moral law: it is man as a whole and as a rational being rising to the ideal of reason.

Even the commonly accredited law of conscience cannot maintain any special or original supremacy, but must in the same way as other claimants become first in our conception of it transformed. It cannot be upheld as some absolute and separate faculty in the human consciousness: a faculty whose mysterious judgments we find strangely isolated from all relation with life and interjected without any sense of unity or consistency, at variance often with both reason and feeling, contradicting other elements in our consciousness, and representing but a fragment of our being. Conscience does not represent in itself a special truth of the moral life, but is only one of the channels through which the truth of life as a whole is revealed. It has therefore no authority in itself, but only represents the authority of a rational con-

sciousness on its practical and moral side. The objective standard of morality cannot rest in such a conception of conscience as would make it a special law of God; for the standard would then become like the law, external and abstract, absolute but irrational. The name conscience may in a general way indeed be retained as the expression of the ultimate moral law; but it can mean to us no longer an imported standard of duty above and beyond thought, or an isolated and fictitious faculty unregulated in its control of man; rather it must be recognised simply as the judgment of the whole consciousness of man, as he is aware of his ideal self in its ruling and guiding of the practical relations of life. It represents to him solely the highest aim and upward trend of life on its moral side; and, along with reason, judgment, and feeling, moves him forward in his unending search for the true and the good.

A rational being can never realise his nature in the lower sphere of instincts and impulses and sensual pleasures; and it is when he rises to the recognition of a rational self that he

first comes to the ideal. This ideal may appear to him then only as a protest, in opposition to the merely sensuous life, and at first it may be empty of any positive thought. There are other and perhaps higher forms in which the ideal may express itself than merely the denial of a sensuous life; but this at least is the first form which it assumes. It is the ideal of reason in himself, and not beyond his own consciousness: and it is this immanence of the ideal in a rational nature which remains ever true. For the characteristic of moral and religious progress lies in the absolute value which man sets on his rational life, on the certainty with which he can appeal to the rational and spiritual element in his nature as final and infinite. This ideal of the moral and spiritual consciousness of man is ultimate; it is life itself—there is no greater good beyond it. The absolute value of the moral life for man, and the infinite claims of its ideal, make the rational foundation of human belief and human effort. In these 'we are greater than we know,' and share life with God and with the universe.

This pursuit of the ideal affords a satisfaction which cannot be added to from without. To offer inducements or rewards to the moral life is to make it almost immoral; it is to conceive the highest good as a means to something advantageous. The ideal contains its own reward: to be good or to be rational, this is final. In this at least heaven can give us no more: if we are to be happier there, it can only be because we shall have the capacity of being better. The bliss of heaven is not an added reward, but the outcome and growth of character. We cannot do righteousness here 'for the sake of everlasting happiness,' or 'with a view to eternal life'; for eternal life is simply doing good and being good: all that heaven can give us is better conditions for such a life. The final satisfaction is a good life, the outcome of a good heart and a good will; and such a life is sought and enjoyed for itself alone.

It is this absolute value of the moral life in its own right that makes the claim of the moral law absolute in its authority. Duty is an ultimate conception, which knows no alter-

native and needs no argument; because it represents the claim of this higher rational life it represents an ideal authority in human consciousness. We cannot add any weight to the claim of duty, and we do not try to explain its right; for to explain duty would be to explain it away. Even when we cannot obey its behests, yet we can never deny its right. To suppose the claim of the moral consciousness denied would be to deny the truth of human nature itself, and empty life of all permanent good. If we cannot rely on the fundamental truth of a rational and spiritual element in human nature, we can rely upon nothing.

But these two characteristics of the moral consciousness, the absolute right, because absolute value, no science of conduct or ethical theory can explain. They are there, but they are ideal and transcendental elements in morality; they belong to the human consciousness as a spiritual consciousness, containing ultimate ideals of its own. Morality is obedience to a law, only because it is first the pursuit of an ideal. It is the infinite

value to human life of this ideal which gives authority to the moral law; and the ideal here becomes its own justification, for without it the moral law would be no longer what it seems, nor the moral life be worth living. It is therefore the rational and spiritual life of man alone, as supplying these ideals, that can either justify or explain morality. For we have already assumed in the moral law something which is beyond it—that is, not merely a finite standard or external authority, but something infinite and spiritual in its nature; and we can explain conduct only from underlying principles and ideals which have already transformed it from mere correct conduct into a spiritual endeavour. We find in moral conduct elements present which individual or external motives cannot explain; there are already latent in it those ideals of our spiritual nature which give to the ordinary motives of conduct the absolute claims of reason. Morality as an external law, and conduct as a system of rules, remain for ever finite and experimental. For no external law, if it be conceived as isolated and arbitrary

in its authority, can do more than take a place as a guide for the spirit of man; for though it endeavours to define morality for him in a number of rules, yet it never can embrace the whole universe of experience in which he lives. For no number of finites can ever make an infinite, and as the moral standard for man is infinite, neither can any lists of virtues or codes of conduct pretend to attain completeness. For human life in its ideals affords ideal standards, and if it rely in experience on moral rules for authority or guidance, it is only as an authority constituted in the service of the ideal.

It is therefore the spiritual, or what we may call the religious, element in human nature which constitutes morality as complete and final, and it does so by imparting to it the authority of a spiritual ideal. Morality, like knowledge, takes refuge in religion from its own incompleteness. The moral life, with external law, acquired habit, and approved tradition, would end with good acts, did not religion supplement it with the ideal of the Good itself. If we speak of the moral life

as complete and satisfying, it is only because we have learned to associate unconsciously with it the ideals of religion. For as the last step of knowledge is faith, so the last step of morality is religion. The moral life where it stops short of the ideal is a life only of expedient rules and codes, and therefore experimental and finite: when we recognise it as of infinite claim and infinite value, it is only through the ideals that religion lends to it. For not even the gradual raising of your standard in moral conduct will bring satisfaction: when you have done all, you are still unprofitable servants. Satisfaction lies only in the infinite nature of the standard; in transferring it from an external law to an inner claim, and from fixed commandments to an infinite ideal. It is religion alone which makes us desire to be 'perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect': but this desire of the spirit is the essential characteristic of our nature, a desire for the full realisation of itself in God. And if we seem to reach this in the conceptions we have of duty and truth and goodness in the moral life, yet these are

ideals which our religious nature supplies, while leading us onward through them into harmony with a universe which no external law can ever explain. If we cannot rest in codes of conduct, or attain satisfaction by working up from lower to higher standards of morality, if we cannot by any process 'become' moral, it is because our nature is spiritual and demands an infinite ideal. This does not of course at all points imply a different kind of morality in its contents; but it does imply a different 'authority' and motive. Conduct may perhaps appear the same, but it has another spirit and another foundation: the house on the sand in no way differs from the house on the rock, but in the foundation only.

The infinite value which man places on the moral ideal represents the conviction that it is nothing individual or temporary, but is the inner spiritual counterpart of a moral order embracing the world, and society, and God. The ideal of man's spiritual nature postulates something wider and higher than his own individual personality: or at least

it postulates a personality wide enough to be at one with God and the universe. The unity of his personal consciousness demands for its existence a corresponding moral unity in the world. He can have no ideal in himself alone, but only in himself as a part of a greater unity,—as representative of a permanent unity in the world and God. But this unity is the first conviction and the first necessity of religion, for it is this which becomes the final answer to all moral questions and the solution of all moral problems. No permanent basis for the moral life can be found except in this ideal of a moral order without at one with that within, a harmony of purpose in the universe, a purpose in which all things are seeking the same end, and all working together for good. Man can have no ideal if it be possible to conceive him as waging only an isolated warfare for himself on behalf of good; his ideal exists only in this, that his nature demands to see itself as part of a great spiritual purpose moving inflexibly forward, in which the outer and inner, the world and man together, have a common

cause at heart, and recognise their unity and reconciliation in God. It is this conviction of a moral order which is above his own individual desires or caprice, above his own indulgence or self-will, a moral order which sets forth the permanent and universal form of his own rational consciousness, in which he finds his true life by becoming part of a universal purpose, in which he gains freedom only when he has recognised the absolute necessity of the divine movement in all that is: this is the moral ideal which man seeks and serves. In this his life is in reality no longer his own; but he finds a new life in losing it, for though he lives no longer for himself, he lives for God who is the first and last cause of this spiritual ideal within him.

It is this religious ideal, namely, that our moral consciousness may be relied on as the testimony of a universal truth and as part of a universal moral order, which saves our moral life from failure and despair. This is the ideal relation, the religious conviction, which saves it from being a mere succession of personal endeavours and unrelated duties, or an

obedience merely to particular commandments. For all these separate commandments and accumulated duties, which ages have agreed upon as guides of the moral life, we now regard as the expression for us in time of the gradual growth of this universal order towards fulfilment and conscious realisation. This is the true conception of 'authority,' which sometimes is set in opposition to such a rational ideal. The authority which expresses the growth and experience of the rational life of man cannot but be unconsciously rational. Our efforts therefore become bound together not only in the unity of our own conscious endeavour, but in the unity of this universal ideal; and though we take our place slowly in the service of this great moral development, and though we find that our acts still require special and vigorous determinations of the will to accomplish, yet we feel that they are no longer mere solitary efforts of our own will, but are the outcome of a wider faith and confidence in a universal movement, that we are gradually coming to life in it, and that its strength is being perfected in our weakness.

Our reliance on our own moral consciousness has brought us into relation with the divine; we are not alone in our moral contest in the world; it is God who is working in us as in all the world to will and to do of His good pleasure. However slowly our character under this ideal is formed, yet we find that our acts and endeavours cease already to have their old isolated and unconnected place. Our efforts of will are beginning to converge into the unity of a new spirit and aim, on which we can more and more rely, something with a steadfast purpose guiding it, something that draws all life together. For moral character lies practically in this unity of the individual ideal with the universal moral order. In this reconciliation with the divine will the true self is born, the new man is created in righteousness, and is already passed from death to life.

It is in accomplishing this transition that the moral ideal in man becomes conscious of its rationality, for the change can thus alone be represented as it passes from what at first may be classed as a subjective feeling to the permanence of a universal standard.

For, once it sees itself thus in relation to God and the divine purpose in the world, the first subjective unity of the moral life has a self-conscious character and has gained a reality beyond the separate aim of an individual life. The daily endeavours of our moral life, conscious or unconscious, are indeed always real, but when they become rational ideals they may be said to be more real; for if the life that 'is' be true, the life that 'ought to be' is more true. Or rather we may express it thus: that the daily endeavour itself has been true and real only in so far as it has represented our unconscious relation to the ideal. The old personal limits of the moral life, of habit, or restraint, or obedience to law, are passed away, all duties in this universal relation are become new.

It is true that the moral life even thus touched by the ideal postulated in religion may still be partly unconscious, still more or less realised; but even in this touch of the religious spirit which comes to the aid of morality with the conviction of the truth of the ideal, the moral life is already related to

the universal world beyond ourselves, beyond the actual. For, by this conviction postulated by faith, religion confers the reality of a universal relation just as surely as by making men intellectual or philosophic; for in lifting them above the limits and restrictions of their individual life, and freeing them from the narrowness and caprice of individual aims, religion reveals her rational nature and the rational ideal which she postulates. For though this new and wider position may be called the mystery of man's religious nature, and the consciousness of the ideal be the gift of the spirit, possible only to his character as a spiritual being, and though such a transition in the moral life may not yet be a process of conscious thought, nevertheless it has the process of reason implicitly in it. For in this religious conviction man reaches the same universal life and motive as reason confers, but does not analyse the process by the way. And although we may call the influence of religion a feeling and emotion, yet it represents here a change which is entirely rational in its result, a change which

has transformed the unregulated endeavours of a subjective feeling into the permanent law of a rational character, and has lifted fleeting aims and individual motives into universal relations and moral ideals. The religious may be the most subjective of all experiences, yet it represents on one side the most objective of all truths: for it makes our moral life then really first our own, when first it makes us conscious that our ideal is in God; for, while it sets humanity in pursuit of an infinite ideal in faith, 'faint yet pursuing,' we live in hope, because it convinces us that our ideal is divine. Through religion the moral life has at last acquainted itself with God, and is at peace.

If the ideal itself, or the ultimate end of moral action, be not in every act consciously before us, and if we do not seem to strive to keep up an artificial conception of our relation to society and to the universal scheme of things, the reason is that the ideal is not something new added to our life from without, but is simply our own life developed and enlarged. We do not strive to remember on

every successive occasion that the moral ideal is essentially a social one, that some world outside of us has claims upon us; but rather we naturally find in the world and in our fellow-men our own larger life, and we therefore in this way find that there is nothing outside of us. Our life in the ideal is just as natural as in what we once called the real. It is still our own life, coming to itself in a wider sphere; still our own ideal leading us toward a world belonging to ourselves. It is our own good that continues to be our aim, though the conception of what that good is may have been changed from what it was. It is still the realisation of our own self that is our abiding law, though that realisation may prove itself to be altogether unselfish.

But there is no reason why the word 'self' should be driven from our religious or moral vocabulary, since in thought we have enlarged its meaning and found in it something ideal. There is nothing necessarily wrong or inherently evil in self, to cause us to abandon both the word and idea in search of some

selfless good. We cannot understand or seek any good except under the idea of its relation to self. There is no 'altruistic' life, emptied of all reference to self and in opposition to or competition with our own ideal. We cannot seek some altruistic life in the abstract, as though it were possible to find any positive or real content in a life that is unrelated to ourselves. The best life is still our own life, and it is still in every ideal our own good that we seek—that is, it is the life of our own self changed and satisfied with what it seeks: having its affections set upon things that are above, not any longer on those that are beneath. But where your treasure is, there will your heart be also; and it is a false religiosity which tries to flee from self and is afraid of its contamination. It is impossible to have a selfless life, or it would be a motiveless life. For motives which have no relation to ourselves are not motives. If the highest motive of life be not within us as our own ideal, it cannot be got from without; and in this will lie always the weakness of any mere law, for it can supply no motive or impulse from

within as an ideal can. But only a spurious and artificial morality can come of a continual war against self; and such a negative form of morality as it supplies can never be regarded as a sufficient rule of life. For if war on self and the world be the whole aim of the moral life, then self and the world must ever be the chief content of its thought; and were these withdrawn or overcome, it would be left vapid and empty. When an ascetic religion ceases to have something to fight, it has no impulse to morality left. But such a negative ideal as this abstract altruism presupposes is entirely impossible; for our aims, whatever they are, must remain our own; we cannot by any artificial and unreal process create external and unnatural aims in morality, or we destroy its whole spirit. The moral ideal, in fact, is Self: but self purified as a rational and spiritual consciousness, and so affording an ideal element, a true self, which finds its life in humanity, in the universe, and in God, but which, in all its widening range, still remains our own appropriate and characteristic personality.

It is thus that the moral life becomes self-

satisfying, and the good which we attain our own good and our own reward. We are no longer in search of some abstract good and some future reward which we regard as decreed by the moral law, added to life from without, and for which all our endeavours here are but a probation and appointed trial. The pursuit of the ideal in life becomes life's own reward, and is indeed already the enjoyment of the highest life that is possible to man. As long as human nature remains what it is we cannot conceive anything higher; for it expresses absolute reliance on God and the moral order of the universe. The consciousness of the ideal within and our confident endeavours to realise it without—this is the final felicity of life. The ideal in its full actuality as a transformed world may here be unattainable, and for us simply to become part of the historical development of the ideal as it passes on may be our only possible attainment; but the process by which it is ever brought nearer, however small our part in it may be, and even if a painful and suffering part, is nevertheless its own reward. Its actual realisation may

be attained under new and perfect conditions of life; but its fulfilment under whatever conditions will only bring a reward already contained in itself, and of which the pursuit of the ideal here is the earnest and foretaste. For here, in seeking to do God's will, we already have found that peace which passes understanding. And even if the moral ideal should for ever remain but a prophecy of the infinite spirit and rational nature of humanity, it is nevertheless a prophecy which is receiving daily a higher fulfilment in the life of the individual and of succeeding ages, and so is daily conferring a fuller and richer reward.

The statement of this position that the ideal self is the standard and motive of life, is easily mistaken for another and a lawless standard which implies that man, each as he is, is the final standard of his own morality, and that there is nothing beyond himself to which he is responsible. But the characteristic of the moral ideal is that it is infinite in its nature, and that it then can only arise within us because the infinite is our true nature. We do not know and cannot speak of the moral ideal,

or ideal self, except in so far as we are above the limitations of an individual self, and rely on finding our true life in society, in the world-order, and in God. It is therefore a contradiction in terms to speak of the self-ideal as a mere individual standard of morality and relative to each person. Were we not universal in our spiritual nature we should neither know the ideal, nor be troubled with its inspiration. For the ideal does not come as a release from law or as a convenient selfishness, but as the great burden and responsibility of that universal life of which it is the truest indication. We walk not by sight but by faith; not by calculation and arrangement, but in obedience to the conviction with which the moral ideal inspires us;—that we attain in the end our highest nature and our highest good only just so far as we are universal in spirit. Its revelation is that we have been made but a little lower than the angels and in the image of God, and that we are able to rise to the conception of the highest life in our infinite if incomplete nature: when therefore we become a law, because we have already become an

ideal, unto ourselves, neither morality nor religion is likely to suffer; for, apart from the ideal which our spiritual nature inspires, neither can in any true sense enter our life. We are not mere irresponsible units, seeking our own ends in our own way, and perhaps unconsciously satisfying a selfish nature under the name of a moral ideal; for though the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit, yet in accepting the ideal we show ourselves spiritual, and in this universal standard we already 'have the mind of Christ.'

Morality is not to be saved by setting up some external and abstract standard, something that is supposed to be absolute simply because it is unrelated to anything else. Indeed it may be said that there can be no objective standard of morality apart from some subjective content; or, if there be, we cannot know it. For an objective which has no relation to a subjective, an infinite which does not take up the finite, a divine which does not realise itself in the human, may be a possible intellectual conception, but it is that alone. It is, however, but an

abstraction of thought, and has no reality for us. For we do not create an objective standard simply by giving to some abstraction of the mind the name of an absolute law—we can only have the absolute law of our own nature; nor is the idea of a conscience or a categorical imperative, standing aloof and uttering commands, anything more real—it must be the imperative of our own rational character speaking in obedience to its rational ideal. The 'good will' itself, apart from any content, is but an unsubstantial fiction, external and artificial. All these standards are supposed to be pure because they have the false perfection of absolute isolation; but, being utterly unrelated to anything else, they are for that very reason inactive and unrealised. They explain nothing and reconcile nothing, but remain entirely exclusive, sitting apart from the world and contemplating a scene of confusion and weakness which they can do nothing to assist, for they have no living relation to it.

But the ideal must take upon it not only identification of self with the thought of

a universal moral-order, but also must take up another definite identification—namely, with the development of morality in the history of the world, and with the approximate and ever increasing fulfilment of the ideal in the process of civilisation. Far from being a mere inner and subjective standard, the ideal takes on the form of the actual embodiment it has gained in the history of humanity, refers itself ever to the outward institutions and laws in which the advancing spirit of man has enshrined it, and compares itself with these attempts at the actual though partial fulfilment of reason in the world. We cannot separate ourselves from history in anything, and certainly not in the moral life; for we are in this also the heirs of the ages, and realise our own moral life only so far as we gather up into it all that has been attained before. We do not start every one for himself to attack the problem at first hand,—we receive it as it has been left to us: others have laboured, and we have entered into their labours.

So far, then, as the ideal seeks to express

itself in the sphere of morality the ultimate standard cannot be defined or set up apart from its relation to the human spirit. This standard must find itself in the conditions of human life — actualising the ideal and idealising the actual. This unity of man and the world in one rational ideal is the highest reached by the analysis of the human consciousness; and this view may be broadly described as the development of Greek thought. The other side is emphasised in the view of the ideal which we find in the Hebrew spirit—namely, the revelation of the religious postulate as God, and the theory of His moral order of the world. It is no longer the nature of man which is the basis of moral and religious life, but the nature of God; it is not the moral ideal as man conceives it, but as God reveals it. We pass from the unity of man's consciousness to the moral order of the world, and the task of fulfilling the ideal is taken from man and left in the hands of God. But Revelation offers no direct or immediate help either in the explanation or fulfilment of the ideal:

it is but a Prophecy always looking forward, and waiting for the coming of one righteous kingdom. 'When Messias cometh He will tell us all things.' Revelation professes to be only a process and a growth—an evolution of the ideal as it takes place under the providence of God.

IV

THE IDEAL IN REVELATION

IV.

The Ideal in Revelation.

The history of the Hebrews is practically a religious history. Their history was so much more concerned with religious and spiritual problems than with material progress, that the characteristic of it at least lies in this, that it cannot be said to receive its full interpretation until read in the light of a spiritual progress. Apart altogether from particular interpretations of that history, the great revelation lies at the root, in the spiritual destiny of the people, in the character of a nation whose history is a religion. But this religious element in their history is not expressed as anything mechanical or sudden, but as coming in due relation to Hebrew character, and as the underlying power of

its spiritual growth. Even the definition of this religious spirit, as a miraculous revelation in time, must still allow that it is mediated to man only through human and even national conditions. It begins, so to speak, at the beginning, and can only go forward as the mind of man is able to receive it—here a little and there a little, with a truth suited to each age of his development. For any such revelation of the truth of God must necessarily be conditioned by the progressive consciousness of man. It may always indeed be in advance of the age, but must always be suited to its needs—suited to transcend and to transform each age, to be the moral and spiritual ideal of each age. But the highest form which such a revelation can be conceived to take must still be bound to history, and find its ultimate shape in relation to life. The spiritual cannot be dissociated from the natural and the actual; and the complete conscious reconciliation of the ideal and the actual will be the final revelation. For though in the simplicity of early ages this reconciliation seems already gained, it is as

yet entirely unconscious, and attained only because the spiritual is still submerged in the actual. Indeed the first token of any true spiritual reconciliation declaring itself is just when an opposition between these appears. But though the first sign of conscious spiritual life must show itself in opposition to the natural, nevertheless in its final development it recognises the natural and consecrates it.

It is in accordance with this necessary development of revelation with history and the progressive consciousness of man that we find the earliest trace of religion among the Hebrews is founded in very simple conceptions of the relation of God and man—child-like in its faith, and almost unconscious of any spiritual problems. In our record of their history in the time of the Patriarchs, religion is for the most part concerned with the example of heroic and saintly lives, and scattered events and incidents which have a spiritual interpretation attached. Religion is naturally localised, and has no pretension to any separate existence: it remains asso-

ciated with anecdotes in the lives of godly men, and with events which have occurred at sacred places—at spots where God had appeared, or where angels were fed, where an altar or pillar had been raised, for a dream or a vision which had brought comfort. We find traces also of local seats of judgment and of prophecy, mostly under holy trees, as at Shechem, and Mamre, and Ophrah. Even the places sacred in the land before the arrival of the Patriarchs are observed with that reverence which gives a touch of universal feeling to primitive religions: once sacred, ever sacred. To these we find Abraham naturally turning as acceptable spots for sacrifice; for there was in patriarchal times little of that later horror of contamination from the religious places of the early Canaanites of which we read so much in the prophetical books. Then a religious place, whether Canaanite or Hebrew, was in itself sacred, and became permanently sacred apart from the means of consecration. And it is probable that even many places associated with revelation in the Bible, as Bethel, or Hebron, or Shechem, were first

associated with the worship of the former inhabitants of the land. Religion felt too strongly the appeal of a local sentiment to be yet in any true sense spiritual.

The characteristic of the age, indeed, was just this unconsciousness of spiritual problems. It is seen partly in this, that religion went hand in hand with the incidental round of daily life which seemed to afford a sufficient sphere for a man's religious service. God was everywhere, and everywhere to be served: life was not only full of opportunities for all the simple rites that religion demanded, but was itself the natural source which suggested them. Life, indeed, was unconsciously sacramental throughout: it may be said that Abraham had not seven, but seven hundred, sacraments in his religion. They came as they were suggested in the recurring seasons of the year, in the seed-time and harvest, in the dedication of the first-fruits of the earth and the firstlings of the flock. But all the incidents of daily life, as well as these outstanding natural seasons, had some religious bearing in the family and the home; and the

very meals and suppers and entertainments were universally opportunities of sacrifice to God. In this way religion was so completely localised in the varying events of life and in the spots of interest in the land, that there was no settled place or form of worship: you could not say where another altar would be built for sacrifice, or a pillar raised as a remembrance, or when the next service in their frequent rites would be paid. This primitive incidental religion was one suited to the life and thought of a wandering shepherd race, dwelling in camps and tents. For their deity moved along with them, and rested where they encamped. In every different tribe a different God encamped; and the God of Abraham was Jehovah. He did not doubt but there were other gods; but this God was his own and supreme. Each god was the tribe's friend, and hero, and avenger; and for Abraham, to be the 'friend of God' was to be at peace.

The permanent spiritual element of the Hebrew religion, however, begins soon to appear, and there is no doubt that in the

Hebrew conception of God the idea not of a local or tribal authority but of a universal righteousness and judgment is already asserting itself. In this the moral ideal takes upon itself the definite form of a righteous government of the world by a personal and divine Will. For under revelation the ideal is not now so much regarded as an infinite consciousness in man himself, as the absolute and inscrutable purpose of a personal God and His relation with the world. There is implied in this the transference of the spiritual ideal from the indefinite claim of man upon himself to definite responsibility in the fear of a righteous God: and this so far alters the problem. For the spirit of man is in a measure released, and the responsibility which he feels becomes only that of his share to be performed in a contract; for the fulfilment of the ideal rests with the absolute will of God. Man may plead with God in the name of the ideal, as Abraham pleads for the righteous; but the Hebrew ideal and the sphere of its action have been transferred to heaven, and the course of the world-order lies in God's hands alone.

It was not, however, till the era which is named after Moses that the problem of this definite spiritual ideal of the righteous rule of the world can be said to appear in the religion of Israel. In this age we have no longer to deal simply with anecdotes and incidents in the heroic lives of the ancestors of the race, but now with real spiritual interests and the rise of a problem which became the origin of a great religion. Now first appeared among the Hebrews an ideal which contained in itself a universal principle. What took place in the age of Moses is in the Bible cast into a dramatic and personal form, but the permanent meaning of it is, that then the spiritual revelation became to the Hebrews the ideal of a supreme and universal moral character in their God. This was the great dividing-line, the watershed, in Hebrew history, and had abiding influences on the national religion. For it was the assertion now made that in the character of their deity the Hebrews had finally judged him as not only separate from all other deities, but as set on a totally different and higher level as the moral ruler of the

world. It was no longer a local or tribal distinction, but a moral and spiritual one; for the God of the Hebrews, being first morally a distinct and separate deity, became at last to them the one Spirit and world-deity. The early distinction of character became absolute and impassable, and emphasised by degrees a universal truth.

It was now that the historical development of the religion took the form which was locally a necessity—namely, that it opposed itself to the nature-worship of the Canaanites and to the immoral gods of the 'nations.' In this opposition, however narrow and uncritical in its conditions, there appears at least the first direct assertion of the moral force of an ethical religion, for even in the crudest form of an ethical religion there lies already the germ of a universal spiritual truth. For though among the Hebrews the former limitations in the thought of God—namely, that He was local, and chiefly that He was powerful—still hampered the new and higher conception, nevertheless the idea that God was holy had laid the ultimate foundation of religion

in the character, not in the power, of God. And the definition of the ideal as the will of a holy God became not only a more fruitful thought than that of power, but was also the indication of the gradual rise of a distinctively spiritual religion, from the first expression of the ultimate necessity of a righteous government not of Israel only but also of the world. The limits of the tribe and of the country have here been passed; man's spirit begins to take in the interests of a larger world, and to recognise an ideal that is at least in principle universal. The question of God's presence and favour now is to be decided, not on a local victory or defeat, but on the supremacy of right and wrong. Man does not stand alone in his obedience to the testimony of his moral consciousness, or rely amid the confusion of the world upon his own efforts only to establish truth; but the God who inspires man with the ideal of righteousness does in the world himself uphold the good and destroy the evil. In such a conception as this there lay the root of a great and abiding unity, but at the same time it became the

source of a world-problem which took ages of revelation to solve and reconcile.

For this problem of the relation of God to the world, especially in its moral government, the problem which checked and ultimately arrested the development of the Hebrew religion, is one which is bound to appear in the first manifestation of the power and reign of such a spiritual ideal as the Hebrew religion had conceived. For, notwithstanding that some form of a spiritual ideal must represent the true unity and final harmony of life, yet the first step which it takes for us in actual contact with the world, and the first endeavour at realisation which it attempts, cannot be without a struggle. Especially in the moral sphere and in religion, we find that the first assertion of the claims of the ideal is met by revolt of the natural self. For though the moral and religious life of the higher self may be said to be contained in the natural, yet it is only unconsciously so, as a latent possibility; and the first demand of the moral ideal is received as an infringement of natural liberty and as an interference by some foreign power

from without: so universally is first that which is natural, and only afterward that which is spiritual. The transformation of the natural is gained at first apparently only as a conquest from without, and the opposition is ever the more fierce where, under the name of the law of God, the ideal continues to be regarded as an external and arbitrary authority over the moral development of man; and the opposition can only cease when at last the divine law is found to be but the true life of man, realising its highest destiny from within. At first all is negative—the contest of higher and lower; for with the mind we serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. The first expression of the ideal takes the form of an unflinching war with the flesh; and its only law is holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Thus the moral consciousness in its actual contact with life is at first dualistic. What it wishes is to assert a universal truth — namely, that the natural in dying to itself will live a higher life in the spiritual; but it can only succeed in making this truth abstract and exclusive, for it em-

phasises one side only of an opposition which it must in the end somehow reconcile. Man's first consciousness of the ideal is not spiritual enough yet to recognise the ideal in nature which seems so different from spirit, or to receive as its thought of God that of one in whom it is possible that all such oppositions of nature and spirit are reconciled together. The end which the ideal has in view is spiritual and universal, but the attempt to realise it in contact with the world robs it at first of its true spiritual nature. But even in such an imperfect form this strife and opposition is still a token of better things,—the presence of an ideal which is restless and discontented with things as they are, and which must of necessity assert itself even if only in the denial of their truth. The opposition shows already that there is latent in man more than a natural life, and that this intolerance of the natural life is the first expression of the spiritual.

This first opposition in the development of the spiritual consciousness is true not only in the history of the individual, but also in

the history of religions. The opposition which appeared in the religion of the Hebrews between spirit and nature was the first form which their consciousness of a universal and righteous rule of the world could take. And although in itself it was a testimony to a final spiritual triumph, it was nevertheless an opposition which lasted through the course of their whole history,—an opposition which their religion never fully overcame, and which indeed prevented it ever becoming anything more than a merely national faith. For this first form of it was the only truth concerning a spiritual religion which the Hebrews could receive—the opposition of God to the world, in the supremacy of spirit. They could not express what His rule over the world was otherwise than as a separate and opposing power, nor what a spiritual God was, but only what He was not — that is, that He was not nature. They were aiming in their thought of God at a universal spiritual truth, but they could not reach it; and when, in obedience to the claim of their spiritual ideal, they abandoned nature-worship, their only

religion was a faith which condemned it with the world, which denied and destroyed it. They had as yet nothing to put in its place except the spirit of denial; and their statement of the divine character seemed to them to be complete in the assertion of the supremacy of the divine righteousness in opposition to the world.

God himself was conceived of as separate and apart from the world, and too holy to be related to common life. His nature forced upon Him the isolation of his own purity; but his righteous rule secured this unity only, to dictate laws to the world from above, where He awaited his own appointed time of judgment, and of rectifying the balance of good and evil by reward or condemnation. He became but an absolute and holy Will; and although continually represented under forms and images of human nature, He was in reality stripped of all personal and human sympathies, and related to man only as creator and judge, whose name was scarcely permitted to be used in the mouths of His own people. And so the revelation of the ideal to the

Hebrews as the moral character of God, and His righteous rule in the world, seeking ultimately the proclamation of some spiritual unity and the solution of moral problems, ended for them only in asserting an absolute division between the human and divine, and offered as the solution of its problems only the external and arbitrary power of God.

God in this first revelation was spirit, but only in the sense that His nature was the denial of matter, and was simply what could not be seen or known under material form. God was eternal, but only in the sense that He had a being which denied the limits of time,—a being which gave no positive meaning to eternity, but only the negative one of abstraction from all time relations,—a being without beginning of days or end of years. Hence came the opposition in the Hebrew religion not only of the original holy and unholy, but of spiritual and material, of temporal and eternal, as irreconcilable and exclusive for the mind of man. The revelation of religion and the moral government of the world lay in the hands of a distant ruler; and

the character of God became so exalted that it had almost no relation with men except by the intervention of a mechanical inspiration. Yet there would have been no progress and no future for a religion which did not feel these oppositions, even if it could not solve them. Naturalism and pantheism feel no such oppositions, but they have no spiritual life. It was the presence of the ideal that was the root of these contradictions in the Hebrew religion, but it was only here and there that a more spiritual prophet or psalmist was able to transcend them and to discern something positive and universal in the ideal of his faith. For the people as a whole were never able to rise above this negative conception of religion; and it was only in Christianity that the contradictions of the Hebrew ideal were finally overcome and reconciled.

But there were other oppositions also which awaited reconciliation; for the development of this ideal, in the form of a creed which separated between God and the world, brought naturally with it the legal and priestly view

of religion so characteristic of the Jewish faith. And this mediating position of the priest between God and the people in the forms of religion was only the visible token of the deeper view of the same priestly attitude which their ideal laid upon them—namely, that the Jews were themselves a priestly nation, and had bestowed on them the priestly function of mediating between the one true God and the world. As there was but one God, and known to but one people, so they became a peculiar people, a chosen race, the depositaries of the divine law, the heirs of the ideal kingdom promised in the covenants.

In this faith grew up the doctrine of the Kingdom—the highest unity which the ideal ever attained in Jewish history. It was, however, a religious ideal which was only presented to the world in the separateness of the 'holy nation' and in right of the exclusive commission which was given by God to the Jewish people. The exclusiveness of this religion of the Kingdom lay partly in the nature of the revelation, but chiefly in the idea that communion with God was not

possible to man as man. The distinction between the creature and the creator was absolute, and any revelation of divine truth to man could only be mediated through certain channels. The Hebrew religion laid no stress on the divine nature in man, and regarded man's inspiration as an external influence. Any relation with God had to take the form of a contract or covenant between two entirely separate parties; and the truth could only be communicated to men through prophets and others, to whom was specially given 'the word of God.' To all those who were outside such covenants of promise, and who had not the law and the prophets, divine and saving truth was debarred. The world and the 'nations' remained in darkness, while salvation was of the Jews. Mount Zion was the hill of God, from whence only the true light shined; and Mount Zion and the Kingdom of God would stand, though all the earth should be moved.

This ideal righteous Kingdom was to the Jews, in the isolation of themselves from all others, but another form of that dualism in

their faith of which they could not free themselves; but it was for a time a source of strength in the maintenance of their religion. For it led them to repel more and more all advances of foreign culture which in the later days of the Old Testament floated towards them from Persia, Greece, and Rome. Their limitation and exclusiveness were in reality their only remaining strength, for the spirit of their ideal could make no advance or supply any new life. And when they had ceased to be any longer a nation, they became even more tenacious of their ideal as simply a religious community, and preserving under the name of the 'congregation' that unity which they had lost as a people, they observed still with increasing fervour, in the ties of the original Jehovah-worship, this narrow bond of the religious kingdom which kept them together from all the world. It was this which enabled them to face the new forms of what was to them the 'modern spirit,' and long to keep it at bay; but even at last, when they were forced into connection with other

peoples, and were affected by them both in faith and habits, they still in all foreign towns preserved their protest and kept themselves separate in synagogues of their own. But this exclusive unity of the nation and the legal uniformity of their worship were bought at too high a price. The religion which had succeeded the exile was entirely external to life, and touched no moral questions or human interests. The dualism in the ideal of the kingdom had done its work: that which had been ordained unto life was found to be unto death. And though the greater spirits of the post-exile time tried still to bring this spiritual tradition to bear on the life of the nation, yet its influence was spent, and it always remained but an external negative ideal, which degenerated into nothing more than the 'Judaistic' spirit. This narrow and exclusive creed, buttressed and supported by innumerable rites and observances, was common in our Lord's day, and was typically represented in the faith of the Pharisees; and it was against this that the teaching of Jesus was naturally

directed, in his endeavour to restore religion to something of its primitive simplicity, and to a new place as a spiritual ideal in the life of the people.

The continuation, therefore, of the revelation into the New Testament is seen chiefly in the form the ideal had taken in the doctrine of the Kingdom. This thought had become to the Jews practically the only connecting link between God and the world, the only form which the work of a righteous God in the moral government of the world had been able to assume for them in the progress of their national religious consciousness. They had reached an exclusive, holy, legal Kingdom, as the instrument in the hand of God for the salvation of the world; but their thought of God had never opened up to them the prospect of a true spiritual kingdom, comprehensive and universal, a unity founded in His spiritual nature. The root of such an ideal, indeed, was there in the conception, however narrow, of a spiritual and ethical deity; and in this conception there had so far been given as a permanent

truth to the Jews among the nations 'the oracles of God'; but the ideal remained one-sided, exclusive, inactive, and hitherto unable to reconcile the world unto itself. There are indeed traces of a universal kingdom in the writings of the Prophets; but it is a universal kingdom of God's reign, not of God's nature. What was still required was to bring out the true spirituality of the Hebrew conception of God, and through that His relation to the world. This was the work of Christ. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. And in this fulfilment of the original ideal he was quite consciously a link in the national Jewish chain of thought; for his revelation was no revolution. He did not cast off his brethren, nor deny the truth that was at the root of the religious ideal of his people; for his message was spoken first to the house of Israel, and went back to its earliest traditions, 'If ye believe not Moses, how can you hear my voice?' There is no break in the development of the New Testament from the revelation in the Old: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers

manners spake in time past by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.'

And He who was the Son naturally gave an interpretation to the doctrine of the Kingdom drawn from his consciousness of God as the Father. Only he who was a son could 'declare the name' of the Father; no one could come unto the Father but by him. It was his thought of the divine character which would remove the narrow unity of received tradition, and open up the spiritual universality which lay hidden in the arrested growth of the Kingdom ideal. The true unity of spirit postulated already in God and in His rule of the world was set forth not of course in philosophical phrase or in relation to thought, but in the simple language of religion and in its relation to the moral life. But the true comprehensiveness of spirit as that which finds itself in nature, and in such a way that all external life ministers to and completes its own, is expressed in its highest reach under the idea of Love. And it was under this definition

of spirit that the character of God was rescued from that Hebrew opposition to nature which had issued in a religion of legal and abstract formalities, but was now set forth in the all-containing, all-reconciling love of the Father.

And in this conception lay not only the thought of love and sympathy and interest toward man, but also, and deeper, that of the necessity of self-revelation in God, whose nature was not to abide isolated and alone but to create; that in creation He might realise the fulness of His own nature, and from creation again receive His own love. Such a thought set free at once the whole spiritual truth of the character of God that had been locked up in the Jewish ideal of the one holy and almighty Jehovah. The divine self-conscious personality was already there, for this was what the protest of spirit against nature implied; the moral character was there also, for it was the revealed source of the final triumph of moral-order in the world; and that element alone was wanting which would expand and complete these

thoughts, bring unity and reconciliation between God and the world, and overcome the absolute separation between human and divine. With the conception of the fatherhood of God this separation fades away; and while the thought of holiness remains, and is strengthened, it has lost the repellent form it had, for the moral law becomes the necessary expression of a divine and loving character, not the command of an almighty and irresponsible ruler. Arbitrariness is taken away from the character of God, and fear from the service of man; for 'we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.'

The same teaching also naturally gave a new meaning to that ideal which had degenerated into the priestly separateness of the 'holy nation,' and had been bound up with the exclusive revelation of God in the Jewish people. On this side also the teaching of the divine Son set free the true ideal which lay below the dualistic conception of the Kingdom, and in declaring the name of the

Father, made the Kingdom the common inheritance of humanity as his children in the unity of 'my Father and your Father, my God and your God.' But this common membership in the Kingdom was of course the assertion of the essentially spiritual nature of man, who shared the divine life, and was able to receive the divine inspiration. If the Jews had received revelation, it was in the name of, not instead of, their brethren. The character of God implies that all men are His children; and the nature of man, that all have access to the Kingdom. They shall come therefore from the east and from the west, and sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God; for God in the creative spirit of love is able even of the stones to raise up children unto Abraham. There is therefore no longer an exclusive kingdom, but a common brotherhood of humanity; but this brotherhood is a spiritual one, for all men are brethren only because they are all children of the one Father.

Thus, what the teaching of Jesus effected was to unfold the ideal that had been wrapped

up in the religion of the Hebrews, and which had taken one-sided and opposing forms in the struggle to free itself; the ideal to which their religion was from the first characteristically reaching forward, but even at the end was unable to attain. Their religion contained the ideal, at least in its essence and principle, and though hidden and frozen up in its final form in Judaism, the ideal came forth from it naturally at the touch of Jesus. But beyond this fulfilment of the Jewish ideal, there was of course to be taken into account in Christianity the ideal in Christ's own spirit and character; for however much of Christianity was historically given in the Jewish tradition, there was also its own ideal in the personality of Jesus which history did not supply.

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THE IDEAL IN JESUS CHRIST

V.

The Ideal in Jesus Christ.

Our faith in Christianity stands in this, that we believe the answer which it gave to the spiritual problems of our race was universal, and that the history of humanity tends to recognise the Christian spirit as essential to its final development. But the form of this universal reconciliation which it effected in the spiritual sphere for man was conditioned at its origin in several ways, necessary to it historically, but in no way very essential to its ultimate character. It was conditioned first by this, that it had to deal with these problems from the national point of view, and according to the previous historical tradition; for the teaching of Jesus was no academic utterance, but a personal appeal, and an ap-

peal to His own people in the first instance. It had to take up the world-problem as it was presented to the Jews, and frame its answer to this problem in a language which they could understand. Now the problem of the universe presented itself to the Jews throughout their whole history chiefly as a moral problem, and a problem which involved not so much a question of individual morality as one of the divine character, and of the moral government of the world. Christianity in its earliest form was led therefore to treat the question of an ultimate reconciliation of the universe largely from a moral point of view; and although such a conditioning of this treatment need not be considered a narrowing of it, yet it is partly the explanation of how natural a feature in Christian teaching it was that its solution of spiritual problems should be generally so closely allied to moral arguments, and that its supreme definition of the divine character should also be mainly, though not merely, a moral one.

In this necessity of facing world-questions from a Jewish point of view, the advance of

Christianity in its general spirit on Judaism is seen chiefly in the rise of the idea that the moral government of the world cannot be carried on as it was conceived in Judaism from without, or as it were by divine decrees. The ideal is still that of a divine moral government of the world, but the ideal of Christianity is that the order of the world itself is moral. The opposition between God and the world, between spirit and nature, is overcome; the whole scheme of things is conceived as ideally divine, as sheltering within itself and gradually in its course revealing the divine character. The world-order needs no arbitrary interference from without to impress it with a unity foreign to itself, or to check or to subdue its opposition; for from the very core it is all moving along with the divine mind, and working out as its own development and ideal a divine purpose. It is God's world, not because He made it and rules it as He pleases, or because it is a mere arbitrary creation of the divine will, but because it is full of the divine spirit, and contains everywhere the divine thought. The world-spirit

is a righteous one, for it is God's spirit, and the course of the world is an expanding revelation of the divine character. God is not to be vindicated or justified by His miraculous interference with the course of nature or His terrible decrees on the actions of men; but He is daily vindicated in the silent movement of the universe itself, for in everything it tends to righteousness. Both the outer and the inner, both the natural and the spiritual, work together for righteousness in a moral continuity throughout the whole, and in one spirit which moves from the heart of the universe.

But the Christian conviction which grasps this moral solution of the world so essential to religion, grasps here in reality a spiritual one which is as essential to thought; for it emphasises that in this moral course of the world there is a unity of ideal both in the natural and the spiritual orders; that in the divine rule for the establishment of righteousness we have only the outward result of that inward unity of the mind and character of God which is impressed on the universe; and

that thus naturally and necessarily all things, both without and within, are working together, that moral truth may prevail. However important to faith the moral truth may be, it is unconsciously based on a spiritual truth more important—namely, that God is not striving with an external world, and that the moral efforts of man are not the single-handed endeavours of a spirit opposed by its natural surroundings and conditions, but that God and man and the universe are all at one, reconciled in God himself.

In harmony with this underlying spiritual unity in Christian teaching, therefore, the final solution of the world is brought back from the ideal of a vast temporal realm subdued by God, and is rather set forth as the victory of that spiritual unity in the highest form of it conceivable—namely, in the moral life of man. The ideal is now not so much the ultimate victory of an arbitrary moral law, or even the victory of an almighty moral ruler or judge; nor is it a reconciliation wrought out so much by the power or fiat of God, as it is, so to speak, perfected by the faith of man; for the

final victory is represented as gained, not by the interference of a power from without the universe, but by the continual dependence of man on the moral order within it. In the life of man is the solution of the universe, because man becomes only then truly moral, not when he relies on himself alone in his struggle in the world, but when he realises that he is victorious in his struggle, because his spirit recognises a spiritual ideal at work in the world-order, in unison with which he receives power to work out his own salvation. For what Christianity demands is not only a life in obedience to the moral law, but a heart that feels the moral order of the universe; a heart which will take all things as they are, and yet believe that they work for good; a heart which, in spite of all appearances, relies on the undeviating course of righteousness in the world; a heart which, though in the world it has tribulations, yet is of good cheer, knowing that in this faith it has already overcome the world. But this solution of the world's problem, by a mind in sympathy with the course of the world itself, is evidently no

forced external reconciliation and no abstract theory or formula of thought, but an ideal life. What Christianity, therefore, offers to us is a Life at one with the providence of God, and victorious in its own harmony with the universe. Christianity, therefore, solves the problem of the universe in the life of Christ; and our belief in Christianity lies in knowing the mind of Christ. That is, the sanction of Christianity is an Ideal.

The solution offered by Christianity is conditioned also by this, that the problem is regarded from a religious, not from a philosophical, point of view, and naturally emphasises the religious element as supreme. Now religion seeks a personal and concrete presentation of the truth, and the demands of the religious consciousness cannot be met otherwise: it needs an object. Truth must be presented to it in a form soliciting faith, love, prayer, obedience. Religion looks at truth embodied or symbolised; she crieth out for the living God, for the Word made flesh. The feelings and the imagination must always play a large part in the elementary stages of the

religious consciousness. You cannot begin in religion with reason, though you must end with it. An abstract statement of truth or a reasoned train of thought, however it may seem to appeal to the mind as clear and cogent, cannot supply to man the place of religion. With the few, indeed, philosophy may become a religion; but that is only where the mind is strong enough to reach the same satisfaction in a final reconciliation of all things by thought, which religion makes more easy and immediate through faith and feeling. With the few, those who can make 'thinking a passion,' such a contemplation of truth, such a knowledge of principles, and of the supreme function of reason, may become power, and become the same power which religion bestows in a form more applicable to life and more universal in its appeal. But reason will not reach the general heart of man, or colour and animate the truth to present it for worship and love in a living form. This personal embodied truth of religion may in the end prove in no sense different from the final truth of philosophy, though sought

in different ways and seen from different points of view; for both seek and rely on the unity of the same worlds of thought and sight, of knowledge and life, of man and nature, in the sense that they are the manifestation of one spirit and the different sides of one unity, though the presentation of this unity which each makes to itself is distinct and characteristic.

The formulas of philosophy, therefore, are not found in Christianity, but the thought is the same. For Christianity has latent within it the permanent and consistent truth of philosophy, though the final unity which it reaches is expressed in the personal formulas of religion. The centre-thought of all takes the form that God is Father; that humanity stands to Him in the relation of a family; and that the course of the world has somewhere within it a Father's love. The world-ideal may be expressed, therefore, as that of a spiritual kingdom in which these personal relations are the aim and law of life, and which therefore is the possession of those who realise in life this childlike spirit; so

that, though such a kingdom is still an ideal, it is thus already latent in the heart of men, and its final comprehension and universality are foreseen. The rational and philosophic truth of this Christian conception of God and humanity and the world as bound in a spirit at once both righteous and tender, or rather righteous because tender, lies in this, that it bases moral relations upon spiritual; and because so in the statement of morality it has postulated the ultimate truth of philosophy Christianity contains the unity of all within itself. The unity contained in belief is justified in the doctrines of theology, because they are the expansion of this truth of thought. For the philosophic value of the Christian mode of thought is this, that the first postulate of faith contains within itself the seed of reason's organic development; the ideal conceived as the end is already in the beginning, and it requires no external aid to complete its growth; the first statement of its truth contains latent its rational vindication which comes through its expansion.

Christian theology is the organic develop-

ment of a latent unity, not a collection of unrelated doctrines; the truth of the idea expands because it has an implicit spirituality which takes up into itself all that it meets, and even what seems opposed to it; and the fuller this gradual reconciliation is found to be, the fuller is the vindication of the unity contained in the first thought or faith. The truth, indeed, may be said to end where it began: but it began in unconsciousness, and it ends in full conscious life. 'After Last returns the First, though a wide compass round be fetched.' It ends, after having taken up the whole world into itself, and having found nothing there that it could not reconcile to its own unity and make use of in its own work. The truth of Christianity lies in its wholeness. It contains no afterthought or compromise, no secondary plan or arrangement; there is no doctrine or belief that does not flow freely from the original thought, or that needs any other proof than that it belongs to and is part of it. The whole scheme of its truth is self-consistent and interdependent; the body exists by that which every joint supplieth.

It is this fundamental fact which allows Christianity to express itself, as no other system of thought or religion can so well do, in natural images and analogies: as of the growth of seed, the relationship of a family, the functions of a body. In all these no element or member can remain separate from or have any pre-eminence over any other; for each is all, and all are through each: the feeble also are necessary, and the master is at the same time the servant. There is no merging or losing either side of the unity; there is no false unity in the abolition of variety, and there is no false supremacy by the interference of external authority. For in all such examples there is more than an illustration or analogy; there is the essential truth of an inner natural organic growth, a growth which reconciles all differences to itself, as the dying of the seed in order that it may live, the bond of the family love through the varied character of its members, and the integration of the body in the differentiation of its functions. Neither human nor divine, neither nature nor spirit, neither

body nor soul, is independent of the other, but all are eternally related in the great world-unity, and in the self-revealing God.

Now it is just here that the very simplicity of the form of its statement naturally reveals the philosophic truth of the Christian faith: for the thought conveyed in such terms as 'Father' and 'Child' forbids the idea of either being in an artificial or external relation to the other, or of the creature becoming merely clay in the hands of the Creator. The creature here is a self-conscious child, and not a passing finite form found and lost in the infinite universe; the mind and will of a self-conscious being are the presence of the divine character in the child, and cannot be ever annihilated again. On the other hand, the infinite spirit of the Father is revealing itself in the children, as the all-loving and all-reconciling deity; not perfect or complete apart from and outside of his world, but only finding his perfection with and in his own creation, working through it all to will and to do of his good pleasure. Thus the necessity laid upon Christianity as a religion of express-

ing its thought in personal and natural forms, instead of in the abstractions of philosophy, only emphasises the more clearly the rational unity of that thought—namely, the essential interdependence of spirit and life, of finite and infinite, of God and man. The final solution, therefore, of the world-problem which Christianity has to propose is no doctrinal formula, but a life lived in this organic relation with God and the universe. It is not a common creed which it proposes, but a common sonship; and the life of the Son therefore becomes the standard of religion—that is, the standard of religion is an Ideal.

These two forms which the ideal takes in Christianity may indeed be merged in one; for the spiritual relation of a son is in itself the root of the moral relation also. The definition of God as the Father is at once both moral and spiritual in its meaning, and moral because spiritual. There is implied in it the thought that the true nature of spirit cannot be known apart from moral relations; that spirit is not a form of abstract and isolated existence, but is rather that which completes

and fulfils itself in all the realities of life. The moral and spiritual become one in life; so on both sides the religion of Jesus is brought into direct relation with the world. For, on the one hand, the moral problem of the world cannot be solved by argument or external interference, but only by a moral Life; and, on the other hand, if man is capable of a spiritual relation with God, he can only enter into it by sharing the life of the universe where the purpose of God is revealed. In either way, moral or spiritual, the ideal can only be wrought out in contact with the world, and cannot even be known or stated apart from it. It is chiefly in this relation to the world of reality that the mind of Christ becomes the true expression of the religious ideal; for the strength and universality of the religion of Jesus is to be found here, that it is for the religious consciousness of humanity the expression in actual historical conditions of the divine mind. Its value lies, not in the revelation of a distant or an abstract truth, but in the revelation of the power of this Christ-ideal to receive and to transform to its own growth

all the conditions of the natural world and all the course of providence. Religion is the ideal which Christ conceives; it consists for him in an ideal unity of outer and inner—a unity which involves a personal and patient subordination of the spirit to what seems an alien world, but a unity through which in this very submission the triumph of spirit is reached, and not only its triumph but its true development.

For while religion indeed is spiritual, it is not so in the sense of being isolated and cut off from life, or having to deal only with faith and doctrine. But it is spiritual when, in the entrance of the spirit into contact with the realities of life, religion shows its conviction that from such a union these contain somewhere the possibility for the growth of a higher truth than either can offer in itself. This attitude is of the essence of spirit, and is the religion of Christ, for whom there is no religion possible where the spirit is afraid of filial submission to the course of the world, not as a matter of obedience, but as the one condition of its own life and growth. It is only on the ground of this conscious willing service as

a son that the spirit of man can gain its true supremacy; for it finds that, in accepting the apparent 'necessity' of the laws and conditions of the world, it has accepted no conditions that are foreign to itself, but in reality has discovered the freedom of a new and wider life. Religion appears as the true ideal of humanity when in Christianity the mutual and inseparable relation of the course of both worlds, the natural and the spiritual, is seen, and when this reconciliation is relied on as the final unity of life, and all things are seen at one in God.

What comes forth from this fusion of natural and spiritual in life is Character: for character cannot be said to exist in either apart from the other, even if it be admitted that either is conceivable apart from the other. There is no character, for there is no consciousness, in a state of natural good or evil. Character appears only in the relation and final reconciliation of nature and spirit. Christianity, therefore, becomes the development of character, because that is the practical expression of the divine and human in a moral and spiritual reconciliation. The law of Chris-

tianity is for us the Christ-character. No fuller statement of it can be given: it is spirit and it is life. It is spirit, because the Christ-character is not only forced, but shows also that it is able, to find its true self when in relation with the realities of this world; and it is life, because in this victorious submission to the Father's world it recognises and reveals its share in the divine nature. The Christian ideal is bound up with everything human, because it believes the human to be divine; it is related to all that is real, because it believes the real to be rational. It cannot, indeed, be defined apart from ordinary human and natural conditions, for the spiritual character is not born but made; it is formed in struggle, 'im Strom der Welt.' A character which relies on seclusion for its perfection, rather than on comprehension, may have a name to live, but is dead. Christianity can be defined, therefore, only in terms of the life of Christ: it cannot become the religion of a book, or the confession of a creed, or a mere mystical sentiment. Christian creeds can never express the infinite movement of

spiritual life in Christ. And, therefore, since all such attempts have failed to realise the desire of men's hearts, Christianity still simply asks 'to see Jesus.' The only creed possible is the confession that the Christ-ideal is supreme in the Gospel.

In favour of the church-creeds a system of unity has been, perhaps, too freely impressed upon the teaching of Jesus, chiefly through the exigencies of the church in her historical development. That widely accepted doctrinal synthesis of the teaching of Jesus is certainly the most easy and direct, in which Christ is the centre of a system of thought, such that his personality becomes an unimportant factor, for it is a point of view in which all is interpreted from a doctrinal theory of his mission. For his teaching is not studied in its natural sequence or the circumstances of its delivery; it is only a systematic declaration of truth, all equally valuable, and all equally dogmatic; his character loses almost all meaning for what it is in itself, and is merged entirely in the glory and dignity of one who is the head of a pre-established order of things.

This gives, of course, what is desired — a logical, objective unity to the teaching of Jesus,—a unity which is from this point of view consistent, compact, and perfect; it is an arrangement and classification of the simplest and most exact kind. But it is a unity one-sided and artificial, imported into and imposed upon the teaching from without, not naturally revealing itself there. It finds a system of thought, because it brings a system of interpretation. And now it has become almost impossible to separate the natural teaching of Jesus from the doctrinal forms which have thus been imposed upon it under Greek and scholastic influences. So completely did the church accept the aid which at one time in her history she thought she required — namely, a logical and compact system of doctrine—that the logical graft has now given a permanent form to the spiritual tree. The aim of the church was to obtain a flawless and impregnable Christian argument, which in its statement could take its place with others in the rivalry of the religious and philosophical schools. The fault of the

church in this lay not in the aim, for Christian truth has proved itself able to receive into itself all the advancing thought of the centuries, but in the method, for the characteristic of Christian truth is neither logical nor syllogistic. Yet the teaching of Jesus was forced into categories and syllogisms with which it had no affinity, and his ideas were expressed in terms common to the schools, but which had never been framed or invented to deal with such a subject—nay, whose very spirit was entirely at variance with the character of Christian truth. This treatment of the Gospel seemed to meet the wants of the church at the time, and at last, as a nemesis, had to be retained as a defence of the historical church which it had helped to call into being.

But in a view of Christianity which makes the character of the Saviour the essential element, the unity of his teaching which we gain is not one of systematic doctrine or logical sequence. It is rather an organic unity, natural and historical,—a unity represented in the gradual growth of an ideal life, and in the expression not only of a religious

but of a universal spiritual character. Christian truth can assume in any statement of it only the natural form which such a revelation of it in character already permits and suggests. It is not dogmatically consistent; it is consistent only as life itself is. It is the counterpart of Christ's ideal consciousness, having for its harmony the manifold variety of one mind. The revelation becomes what the interaction of the inner spirit and the external conditions of life make it; it expresses itself according to the presence and pressure of the realities of the world which it meets. It is not a prepared or premeditated utterance, and has no pretension to the unity we expect in such a statement of truth. It is not the expression of a consciousness set free from contact with things as they are, and allowed to meditate on truth *in vacuo*. It is only the unpremeditated language of a spirit grappling with all the external conditions of its existence, gradually finding the growth of its own truest life in contact with these, and resting in a final reconciliation beyond them both in God.

It is the conscious harmony of this reconciliation in God of the outer and the inner life that gives its real unity to the teaching of Jesus, and impresses it with the only method and system it has; and the teaching is seen to rise to its highest where the struggle to gain this reconciliation has been most acute—that is, in the teaching of the Cross. But the Gospel narrative is, and often confesses itself to be, the necessarily imperfect attempt to express Christ's consciousness of this spiritual victory, and of his confidence in an ideal world-reconciliation which already was realised in himself. But if the expression of the truth in words must fail and fall short of such an ideal, and if in the statement of it there were also many things that his hearers could not receive, it is because the ideal, the life of Christ itself, can never be adequately expressed in words or become complete or fully interpreted in any form of revelation.

That Christian doctrine should be but the expression of this reconciliation of the world in God, as realised in the historical unity of a life, makes all the difference when we speak

of 'going back to it' now, and explaining it as the underlying idea of religion. For the teaching of Christ, like his life, can only be represented as an ideal, and an ideal that is ever unattained. It is historically past, it is spiritually ever coming. For in a sense our Christian ideal is both behind us and before us—behind us in Jesus himself, before us in the destiny of a Christian humanity. And this spiritual destiny of humanity remains infinite and unlimited, for the life of humanity cannot rest in anything finite but is ever changing and enlarging, while it strives in every age to fulfil the prophecy of the ideal. Greater works shall we do because He has gone to the Father. This progress of the Christ-ideal cannot be limited in thought, for the universal and absolute 'spirit of truth,' which is presupposed as the standard both of thought and of religion, continually takes of the ideal in Christ and shows it to each age, until the problem of a divine and human reconciliation, and a final unity of all in God, goes on increasing in depth and complexity as the world's history advances. The ideal

has to realise itself now in vastly wider conditions, and the prophecy which life bears to its final unity is therefore ever richer and more full; for the relation which the spiritual consciousness of man, as he has learned to know it in Christ, has to modern life brings forth ever deeper and more varied problems for reconciliation. Neither life nor the ideal can be stationary, for they are both dominated by an infinite spirit. And the ideal which Jesus set before the world can never now be deemed past or forgotten, or only an historical example for our imitation, for it has become the eternal spirit of humanity.

And when we go back to the study of this eternal ideal represented in the mind of Christ, we go back with all that we are and have since become, with all that the growth of the ideal in humanity has since gained. We cannot divest ourselves of what has since been in the history of the world, for this would be casting away our faith in the ideal itself. We cannot again become 'primitive Christians,' or go back to a 'sub-apostolic church,' even if we would. We who have

'not seen' are in a sense more blessed than they who have, for we see the spiritual ideal at work in a wider sphere, and its more comprehensive realisation in humanity. We see Christ not indeed in the body but now in the humanity which he has sanctified; we have a fuller acquaintance now with his mind in the growing movement of the Christian spirit; and we understand more deeply now the problem of his life, the infinite problem of the world. The ideal of the Christ-revelation has taken for us in all this a higher sense and a wider meaning. We have, indeed, become part of the revelation itself: for it is still evolving itself in the world-struggle, and is approaching ever to a more complete reconciliation by reason of the increasing contradictions it has to face. The truth of Christ's teaching becomes thus more true to-day than when it was uttered, because it is now brought before the world in deeper and more complex forms. It is the same Gospel, yet another; for the wider conditions in which it has to be realised bring out a higher phase of its truth. The course of the

world has laid upon humanity the burden of filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ; that his ideal, without the humanity of all succeeding ages, should not be made perfect. This continued fulfilment in every age is the inheritance of the Christian Church.

VI

THE IDEAL IN THE CHURCH

VI.

The Ideal in the Church.

All history must be conceived as linked together: it is a growth, not a mere succession, of events. There can arise no desire to study history, and there is no possibility of comprehending it if it be regarded as a mere unordered mass of facts: for you must presuppose some link of reason among scattered and disconnected facts if you wish to understand them, to bind them together in the hope of some solution. You presuppose some inner link of reason as the plan of a house, amid the mass of stone and lime; for it is the plan of the house that makes it, and not the stone and lime: it explains and gives meaning to the individual stones, by setting them together in a relation that is ruled by reason.

It was the idea that arose in the mind of him who planned it which gave the first unity and purpose to all the scattered material of which it is composed. Take away the form, the conception, the idea, and the house falls into elemental rudiments. From a heap of unrelated stones you can take away what you please, and the heap still remains what it was; but from a house you cannot remove anything, and yet retain it as the same house. The idea has been touched and altered; and it is the idea that is the real and permanent in the building. The house in its material is but the transitory form of an abiding thought: the seen is temporal, it is the unseen that is eternal. This is even more true in the case of the unity of a plant, or a tree, or a human body. With these the unity is organic—that is, it implies a natural growth of an idea from within, and not the imposition of a plan from without. In their case it is an inner and necessary development, each towards its own ideal, in which the parts are even more intimately related, because the root passes into and becomes the tree, and

the tree passes into and becomes the branches; so that in the final result all is organically interdependent, and each part retains its own ideal only by and through every other.

Some such unity must be presupposed in history, for it is according to such a principle of growth alone that history can be comprehended—namely, as an organic part in the outward expression of the world-ideal. The orderly reason in the world-system which, as we have seen, science requires to postulate before she can attempt to understand it, must embrace also the growth and development of history, if we are to have any hope of unravelling it. History is but the conscious side of the evolution of the world-reason, and must show some plan and purpose, of whatever kind, whether continually imposed and rearranged, as Judaism would hold, by the interference of an external providence, or, as Christianity would say, working itself out in reason as part of a rational system. The purpose revealed in history may thus be regarded as intentional and prearranged, or experimental and ideal as to its issue; but

in either case there is the revelation of reason gradually becoming actual, and fulfilling its inherent possibilities. Under the Christian conception of a spiritual universe the first ray of comprehension of history can only come when you begin to feel here also the need of laws, of cause and effect, of advance and growth—that is, when you realise that in all different spheres of a spiritual world-system there must be as its chief characteristic some continuity of reason, some unity between subject and object, between the mind of man and the world in which he lives.

This rational unity of the ideal is as necessary a postulate in the apparently lawless growth of history as in the ordered growth of nature. As to what the ideal latent in the history of any separate people is—this is a difficult speculation, even in dealing with the history of past ages, where, apparently, all the elements for decision are before us; and much more difficult where the movement of history is still in progress, and passing now in the present, where we ourselves, the actors in the movement, need to read the

signs of our own times. Many ideas and solutions as to the part played by different epochs and nations will be hazarded by different interpreters, and these may by degrees combine to form an accepted explanation; but at the best our efforts are only 'ideas thrown out at great subjects,' to approximate gradually to the grandeur and truth of the great world-scheme, and to render the universe more and more in every part comprehensible and interdependent. The absolute truth we cannot speak of — that lies with God. But the approximate truth, in which our reason sees ideas as the unity of things, and finds them beginning to fall together and appear in reconciliations among difficulties and contradictions, this we can speak of and vindicate by degrees in every department of historical observation.

The reliance we place on this conception of history enables us to make a step forward in regard to it — namely, to the certainty that nothing fails of its fulfilment, nothing is permanently lost in its relation to the

whole. Some ruling idea of one age may in the next age be left behind, or the result of some critical event may seem soon to disappear; but in either case it disappears only to assume a new form of life or to produce from itself a new power in its stead. There is a continual advance and change of form, but there is no change of aim in the rational development of the world. The original idea, with its inherent rationality and underlying order, dominates the whole from the beginning, reappears ever again in the altered conditions of history, and begins anew to reconcile these unto itself. Both in nature and humanity we may speak freely of delay and apparent failure, but we dare not speak of defeat or permanent loss; for the universal reason, working throughout the whole, continues to find a way for itself towards the ideal amid all contradictions of local and finite conditions; nay, it gathers these up gradually for service, until the very wrath of man is turned to praise.

And even if men make mistakes, and one man here is blind and selfish, and another

man there seems a failure in the cause of progress; yet it is only as an individual he fails, and his work may not end with himself. He has been but a finite and imperfect 'instrument' in the service of an infinite idea, and that service will continue in others. Moses does not bring his people to the promised land; but he lays his hands on Joshua, and re-creates his own spirit in his successor: which is a parable of the whole. The Old Testament covenant fails, but not till it has produced the spirit which demands and is fit for the New covenant. John the Baptist must decrease, but only that Another may increase; and because the least in the new kingdom is greater than the greatest in the old. And so the idea fulfils itself; the apparent failure of each man or of each age still creating a spirit that is higher than its own, and fitting that which succeeds for a better and wider work. The greatest failure in moral progress that we ever speak of, the Fall in the Garden of Eden, was in reality the first step in the moral development of humanity—the passage from unconsciousness

to the knowledge of good and evil, the passage from innocence to holiness. And each succeeding failure of laws and covenants and ordinances has only been a failure in so far as it has died that another might live; the promise which has been broken to the ear has still been kept to the heart.

This is the essential truth in the conception of the Church—that it is the dwelling-place of the religious ideal, and abides through all change. The religious ideal in a nation does not fail or die: it may change its form, or seem for a time submerged or lost, but there is still life in the stock of the tree though it be felled, and there is always a Remnant left to abide in every generation as a holy seed. The church indeed is just the ideal nation on its religious side, as the State is the ideal of its political life: and these abide as testimonies of the rational nature of humanity. So far the nation is true to God as she is true to her spiritual ideal; for thus the nation views herself as an instrument of His will, and bears undying testimony to His truth. The church is eternal,

because the spiritual nature of the nation is eternal; and this spiritual nature transmits its ideal through all ages. This thought of the permanence of the ideal was the basis of the Jewish church, and was the great characteristic of Jewish faith: their church would remain, as long as their certainty of the moral government of the world remained. But the church was in the nation long before it took outward shape in the form of an institution, or represented definite statements of truth in the law and in the testimony. Israel was the church from the beginning, for the very *raison d'être* of the nation was its moral and religious ideal. When Abraham was the nation, Abraham was the church; for the promise 'was made sure to his seed,' that he 'might be the father of all them that believed.'

And the same thought, of the continuity of the church and the spiritual kingdom among the Hebrews, was the sustaining theme of the prophets, who still saw this national ideal when it was lost to others, and still cherished men's faith by preaching

it. And this is often the last and only resource that Providence seems to leave them in times of trial and contradiction—to declare, even in the darkest epochs of the national history, the prophetic message that the nation in the time of its trial as well as in the time of its prosperity is still working out a divine purpose, and will neither be deserted of God nor suffered to perish. Sorrow and exile are to bear their fruit later; the suffering nation is yet to see of the travail of its soul; and all at last is to reveal the righteous purpose and testify to the glory of the nation's God. It is in this form of the ideal that the religious faith of the Jews permits a glimpse of a universal element; for, passing beyond their own national prosperity, they seem to perceive that they themselves, the servants of the ideal, as well as others, must take the divine punishment for good. For, whatever the people as a whole might think, the spiritual Remnant consistently clung to the ideal of the moral government of the world even in this its final demand, that their own sufferings must in some way be a divinely appointed

means for the preservation of the truth. And this trace of a universal spirit in the Church-idea in Israel was the seed of a spiritual growth in the nation's religious history which afterwards made it possible for it to become another and a wider faith. Whatever the Jewish church might within itself become, this at least was a savour of life unto life, of Jewish faith to Christian thought. As a nation Israel might perish; as a church she did not die.

This in the end was the 'glory' that remained to Judaism—the testimony of history that as a religious faith and a spiritual church it was a stage of development in the growth of a higher ideal. Its own national glory passed away—that is, the glory of its temporal grandeur and of its great history; but, 'if that which was done away was glorious, much more that which remained was glorious'—that is, its faith and its ideal. For the true greatness of the Jewish church lay, not in what it had itself become, but in its prophecy of still becoming something better; and in this reaching forward to what it could not in itself

attain, it shared the glory of a future and a higher fulfilment. Judaism is not to be estimated for what it was in itself, for in itself it remained largely local, national, and legal; but it is to be estimated for what it was capable of becoming, for the possibilities it contained, and for the implicit spirit of a future church which would rise from its fall.

For the essential truth and character of a religion are not necessarily found in its historical origin, but rather in its future fulfilment; not in what it was at the beginning actually, but in what it was ideally. The ideal is the truth of a religion; and this is not so well seen in its origin, for in their origin almost all religions are alike, as in what it has since become, in what it has now produced. For what is first in origin is not therefore necessarily first in idea. Historically, that is first which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual; but spiritually, the ideal which is the truth of a religion is first. As the fruit, which is the final truth of the seed, may be said to be ideally before the seed itself, the ideal which

is already latent in the seed, the first in thought, though last to sight: so is it with the history of a religion. The search, therefore, for what are called the 'origins of religion' has only a scientific interest, not a philosophic or religious interest; for it is only gathering material for philosophy to value. A beginning, merely as a beginning in time, has no special interest or meaning; early tribal customs and superstitions reveal little of the true germ of the religion which you study. For almost all religious beginnings are equally crude, and their true and characteristic nature does not appear until afterwards, when their development is completed. The beginning is but a prophecy and a possibility: it can only be understood in the light of the subsequent fulfilment, as nature is finally understood in man.

In a statement of this kind it is easy to misunderstand and misinterpret such a claim as, for instance, that all nature is to be estimated in man, or that all nature has been only 'for man' as its end. But this simply implies that nature has finally become conscious in

man as its highest ideal; that man was the great possibility latent from the first in nature; and that now in man nature is finally understood, for she has proved herself not material only but spiritual. It is this law which science has made the standard of value in the development of species in the natural world—that you understand the lowest form only when you recognise in it the highest, or the first only when you trace in it the lineaments of the last. And it is so in the moral and spiritual sphere also; for in the world of thought an idea is estimated by its vitality, its endurance, its productivity. The spiritual talent has a value which can be known only in what it produces, in what it becomes in the strife and clash of its development, or by what springs from it when it dies. Now, the distinctive mark of the Jewish faith is that it produced Christianity. Other attributes it may have had in its origin in common with other religions, but this one is distinctive, and shows that in reality in its origin it can never have been comparable with the others.

St Paul was perhaps the first to make an

attempt from the Christian point of view to read into the progress of the Jewish church something of a philosophy of history, by tracing in its course the unity and final development of the Christian ideal. So extreme indeed is his view in the direction of this identity, that he hesitates at no explanation which will preserve the continuity of the church and account for supposed deflections in its course; for, even in the opposition of the Jewish church and the contradiction it presents to the Christian faith, St Paul sees good instead of evil. We cannot help feeling keen sympathy with him in his endeavour to trace the progress of the future church among the Jews, even to the belief that 'their casting away was the reconciling of the world,' and that others 'obtained mercy through their unbelief.' For though such interpretations cannot, of course, be either historically or exegetically pressed, yet the idea of seeking some thread of unity between the growth of the Christian church and the course of Jewish history is at least right, and the sentiment that guides Paul here is fine. So also we

sympathise with him while he is seeking the same end from another point of view, when he declares that 'he is not a Jew who is one outwardly,' and that it benefits not the Jews to say, 'We have Abraham to our father'; for these declarations of early Christian thought are meant to establish the continuity of the history of that thought through the church; not in the actual, but in the ideal, nation; and to recognise the succession in the spiritual line only. The ruling thought of St Paul's interpretation of history is, that the Jewish church represents the progress and the permanent supremacy of the coming Christian Ideal, and that the nation takes its place in the divine purpose only in virtue of its connection with this ideal, and is a spiritual people only so far as it embraces this.

St Paul seems almost to emphasise the idea, which indeed was true in his individual case, that this spiritual unity of the two dispensations, Judaism and Christianity, could not have been thoroughly known except in their disruption. For himself the unity became more marked when in his experience the two

had been completely sundered, and each side expressed its own share of the truth. It is for this reason that the ultimate reconciliation effected by Paul was more perfect than was the unconscious sense of national unity which lingered in the minds of the Disciples; because with Paul the unity of the two became a conscious unity in thought, after the final disruption which he saw between them in faith. It is at least certain that the latent spirit and possibilities of Judaism were not, and probably could not be, recognised in their relation to Christianity without that disruption, which, though it showed Christianity as the opposite of Judaism, yet at the same time revealed in it the more perfect and permanent half.

The continuity of the church through Christ was first consciously recognised by St Paul, and is first seen by us in the reconciliation which he effected on a rational and spiritual basis. In its own local and legal development the true Jewish ideal, the true Jewish church, could never completely 'find itself'; its Messiah was still to come. To us and to

St Paul it fully realised itself and came to its destiny when, its national development having been stretched in one exclusive line to breaking-point, at last in the opposition of Christianity the true ideal appeared. The eternal spiritual ideal could not grow further within the church of Judaism; the new wine required new bottles; and in the reconciliation with the Gospel which the thought of St Paul accomplished, the best of the old dispensation was saved. Even the Cross reflected back a glory and honour on the old faith, for it was found to have been spiritually foreshadowed under the Jewish ideal; and that, therefore, which had naturally been to the Jews a stumbling-block became to those who could see it in the spirit, 'whether Jews or Greeks,' the very token of the power of God. Far from there being any break in the continuity of the church, it was seen that in both dispensations all were, consciously or unconsciously, 'one in Christ Jesus'; for He was the consummation of the ideal which embraced both, and so 'the head over all to the church.'

The church, therefore, now became universal, as the ideal was universal; and, as 'the body of Christ,' the Christian community in a living and actual society testified to the ideal of the religious consciousness in a higher form than Judaism could contain. It is the testimony now of humanity to its own spiritual ideal, no longer to the ideal of the Jewish nation; it is the testimony of humanity identifying itself with humanity's Saviour; it is the response of humanity to the appeal of the Cross, because of its truth to the highest needs of humanity. The reconciliation of God and man, of spiritual and natural, of temporal and eternal, was in Christ universal and complete; and to the truth of this universal Life humanity gathers as to its final ideal. The church, indeed, must ultimately become humanity, for already in its origin it was ideally humanity; and the Christ-life which it proposed as the final religion for man was universal both in sympathy and in aim.

At first, it is true, the church of the disciples regarded themselves as testifying to an individual ideal that had been, to a personal

tradition that was past, to the continuation of a memory and an example. The work of the disciples, therefore, was chiefly the recording of this tradition and the perpetuating of this memory—a work that remains precious to all ages in the Gospels, the life of Christ among men. But St Paul saw in the church not only a memory but a life, and not only the testimony to an individual life, but to a life which was the incarnation of the eternal attributes of God. To him the church was the embodiment of no accidental ideal, but the only and necessary form of the divine ideal itself; the rational and spiritual community in which man at his best finds his true nature revealed, because he finds the divine nature revealed. This is the Christian doctrine of the church: that, because it is the living body of Christ, it is the spiritual ideal of the race, humanity as it is in the purpose of God, as it is seen in the light of the eternal. The Christian church waits only until humanity itself become the church, until in the Christ-ideal it has recognised and found its true life. Christ is not dead,

but lives for the world in the church. The eternal spirit of all goodness and all grace, of which he was the incarnation, abideth for ever; and that eternal spirit, though the possible inheritance of humanity, is now ideally embodied in the church; for that community represents humanity in its Christ-relation with God and with the world. The kingdom of God, therefore, has come; the kingdom of God is among us. The church is the ideal kingdom, if the world will receive it.

The truth which lies in this transference of the ideal from its local and historical form in Christ to a living spiritual Community, in this passage from the kingdom of the Son to the kingdom of the Spirit, is that a spiritual church must be organic in its development and growth; it must be self-determining and complete in itself. It cannot claim to be a spiritual power if it be but the creation of an external influence; it cannot move onward now from any original mechanical impulse; it cannot continue to exist merely as an accepted testimony to what is past. The commission on which it exists must be within it,

because the church recognises itself as divine, as having a divine ideal within it. Its commission is that it is the dwelling-place of the ideal; this is a commission which it itself freely recognises and accepts, and which becomes the perennial source of its principles and its aims. Its first cause, therefore, the Christ-ideal, is its final cause; and it is the growth of this final ideal from within which alone and in itself can afford a reason for the various forms the church may take in the course of its development. For the church grows freely from within, and, as a spiritual body, is a self-determining one. There is but one law which it recognises, that of the ideal dwelling within it and seeking in all ways in its contact with the world to make actual the spiritual life which it contains.

The teaching of the church, therefore, is not merely the echo of another voice, the tradition of a past truth, the remembrance of a historical event. It is rather the beginning of a new dispensation, representing and making actual the new ideal. The teaching of the church is the life of the church itself,

expanding into all the forms which the inner ideal may prompt it to take, and initiating from age to age the manner of its own movement. When, therefore, the church states 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' and the faith as it was 'committed to the saints,' it states it in its own way, in every age, and as an ever-living truth of its own, because the church recognises it as the ever-living truth of humanity. It is indeed 'the old old story,' but not merely reiterated and repeated; it is interpreted, it is restated, it is daily set before humanity as its advancing ideal in the varying conditions of the world's life and progress. Were the teaching of the church but a mere repetition, then the truth of the church-idea were entirely lost, and it would cease to be a living and self-developing force in the world. It would then be but a school of theology only, or a college — a body instituted and created from without, and engaged only in the study of documents and decrees. But the life of the church, like all spiritual life, is organic in its progress, and complete within itself — the gradual solution and ever more

perfect expression of a spiritual ideal. It has in this ideal its own inspiration, and goes forth to reconcile all things to its own truth. The symbolism of Pentecost has no meaning, if it does not mean this: that the church, while representing the permanent Christ-ideal, is her own interpreter, her own translator. The truth of Christianity must become her own truth, or it is not worth rehearsing. She must, like the Son, have 'life in herself.' For her life is her revelation, and it is made again and again in new form to her people.

The modern life of the church must be regarded in this light. She is a living initiating force, as the progressive historical embodiment of the Christian consciousness, and emphasises in her corporate life not one institution or one form of doctrine, but the growing spiritual and social ideal of her great Head. She is the heir of all the Jewish and Christian ages, moulded as the result and outcome in humanity of centuries of adaptation and growth. Her mistakes and weaknesses, as well as her truth and her virtues, testify to this endeavour of self-developing life. But the life and the creed of

the church continue through all to be an approximation in actual conditions to the ideal; and the reconciling spirit within her is ever extending her realm, though it is never complete. The infinite ideal cannot be fully seen in a humanity which is in bondage to the finite conditions of the world; and at best it is ever but in a state of becoming, in a continuous transition, in an infinite progress. But the church represents this process of widening continuity in the ideal, and of final reconciliation of the world in God; and, as humanity accepts the Christ-ideal, that reconciliation becomes more and more complete. The church is thus ideally the manifestation of the Spirit, returning again to the Father in the Son, with a reconciled world.

But the characteristic of this progress is that, unlike the course of the Jewish church, it is no longer toward the ideal, but is now within it. There is still indeed an infinite progress to be made; but it is in the realisation of an ideal which we have seen attained, and in the fuller grasp of a truth which is already in the possession of humanity. We

are no longer in search of our ideal, or waiting for the coming of the kingdom; we are no longer strangers or foreigners, but already citizens of the kingdom; we now only strive to make our citizenship perfect. In faith the ideal is already ours, in actual life we seek to make it so. The religious spirit has grasped the ideal and finds full satisfaction in contemplating it; but the progressive knowledge and apprehension of it, and the endeavour to transfer it into human life, this still remains the infinite task. But it is not an effort after what is external or foreign to our life; it is not an effort after an unknown ideal for which still we must all 'die in faith, not having received the promises'; it is rather an effort to make more our own what has already become ours, and to realise in our common humanity what we know now to be its final destiny. And therefore in this endeavour we sorrow not as those who have no hope; for we know that we are not following a phantom or cherishing a dream, but are inspired by what in the experience of every day we recognise to be the rational ideal of human life.

VII

THE RETURN OF THE IDEAL

VII.

The Return of the Ideal.

THE original ideal of Christianity lay in the actual historical life of Jesus. That contained a reconciliation of the universe for man, and a solution of the contradictions implied in the meeting of the outer and inner worlds, not by abstraction or elimination of the oppositions, but by the free action of a spirit which recognised the 'necessity' in actual worldly conditions as a means to its own perfection. This acceptance by Christ of the world's life as a necessary means of the spirit's growth, as the only sphere for fulfilling the religious nature of man, and the only possible road to the perfect knowledge of God: this was the vindication by Christ of his faith in the ultimate unity of the infinite and finite, the

world of thought and the world of fact; his faith in both as the manifestation of one principle; his faith in both as essential elements in the final spiritual kingdom. In the strength of this faith he humbled himself under all the conditions of life, with pain and sorrow even unto death; and in the strength of this faith these conditions, which are to us the typical features of the opposition of the outer world, became for him the avenues and channels of grace, the seeds of a spiritual life that the Lord was planting and not man.

But this reconciliation took place in the simplicity of faith only, in the sphere of religion and the moral life. It was indeed the universal ideal, but clothed in the form of an individual life, and presented to us in the region of simple trust in the universality of a divine purpose, that all things worked together for good. And the teaching of this ideal life was as simple as its faith: 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' It is true that this was just the novelty of it, and its value: that it faced the

question of reconciling the outer and inner, providence and history, God and man, time and eternity, not in the schools of thought or at the feet of Gamaliel, but in the actual experience and contradictions of life. It was no mere academic solution of the problem, or the application of some rabbinical ready-made theory; but it was the victory of our ideal humanity in actual contact with experience, and the triumph of a religious spirit which, though unique in itself, is in its essence common to the race. And it is in this that the solution remains a permanent and eternal truth; for the Christ-ideal has passed naturally into the possession of humanity, and has found a place to abide in the life of the world. It is not a doctrine, but a life, a spirit, the ideal life of humanity, the highest and therefore the truest characteristic of man's nature. For it is true, not only because it is historically recorded and because the church bears testimony to it, but because it is true to what humanity is and to what it is yet to be; because his life has interpreted to men the highest ideal of theirs,

and because men cannot now think of what human life means apart from His. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. It is the true, the spiritual ideal, not because it holds up to men something which is separate from the ordinary conditions of their life and out of their reach, but because it shows what spiritual elements lie hid in life, and how divine humanity and its world are. It is the truth for humanity, because it is divinity; the prophecy of all that the world means.

But because of the very permanence of its principle, this ideal was not likely to remain for the church permanent in its original form. Some loss of simplicity was almost essential in its development through an institution which had to formulate its truth under the laws of spiritual growth, to bear witness under the necessities of every age to the Christian ideal. The church could not long exist as a mere spiritual brotherhood linked in the bonds of the ideal. Ultimately it would have to appeal to more than simple faith if it was to satisfy the wants of man; it would need in some way and to some

extent to rationalise its ideal, and offer to the world a truth that touched not only the heart but the mind of man, and which was seen in some sense to enter into the plan of the universe. The universal element in the Christian ideal had to be disclosed in what were its temporal conditions, and its relation to an infinite and eternal movement even in its finite form had to be revealed. It had to be schematised and laid down in its broad and general principles; for the faith which had gained the victory for man had to be shown to be in its ground a rational faith, relying on something more than individual feeling, and supported by the world-order and the divine nature. The Faith of the church had to become a Theology, and in the transition leave behind its simplicity of form.

But the loss of simplicity of form in the statement of the Christian ideal through the growth of theology is a loss more apparent than real, for it was historically necessary. The chief complaint that can be made of Christian theology as a science is, not that

it restated the Christ-ideal in a rational form, but that the attempt to rationalise it was so imperfectly carried out. For the rationality of that ideal Life was not sought for within itself or developed from the implicit reason on which its universality was based, but was forced upon it in the shape of a formal system from without, under which it was pressed into categories of thought which were not only unfitted to deal with the problem of such a life, but were naturally opposed in their method to its spirituality. The logical processes of the schools knew nothing of a spirit which could be at once the harmony in itself of both finite and infinite, both human and divine: to them such conceptions were abstract terms of thought, absolutely exclusive and contradictory. This logical rationalising of the ideal became part therefore of the theology of the church through a conception of the material and spiritual universe both inadequate and one-sided. For, in accordance with the laws of abstract thought and reasoning, the spirit of God and the divine character were conceived of in the most ex-

ternal and mechanical manner, as ruling and manipulating the material universe from without, and in themselves entirely separate from its true organic development. The Christian ideal of religion, therefore, which relied for its implicit rationality on the thought of an inner unity of the spiritual and material world with itself, lost all this rationality when forced into a merely logical scheme of the universe, abstract and unreal; and the life of Jesus which contained this eternal unity wrapped up in itself became little more than the subject of doctrinal formulas, and the text of an artificial theology. The Christ-life which had revealed the ultimate harmony of the universe, and in the name of this had appealed to men with an ideal of triumphant faith and love, seemed in itself to show none of the rationality of such a thought when analysed in the schools of Aristotle's theology, where it became an abstract theory and a formal doctrine in the definition of the church's faith.

Thus the first attempt of the early church to rationalise in theology the Christ-ideal

was, after all, only theorising, not rationalising; and the universality which it gained in this was only the false universality of a formally logical statement imposed on it from without, instead of one which would bring out a necessary universality by the law of its development from within. For the Christ-ideal could only ultimately claim the world for its own in so far as it represented a latent unity of thought in the world; in so far as it contained an implicit reconciliation of the universe within itself; in so far as it revealed the universal harmony of natural and spiritual, of which it was both the token and the prophecy; in so far as in it the divine and human were one, not in a logical statement but in a spiritual life. But the scheme of the world into which the Christian ideal was made by the church to fit was just one where this sense of an organic and spiritual unity was unknown, and where, partly from the authority of the schools, and partly from the remains of Judaistic feeling, the chief thought of religion lay in the expressly artificial combination of two characters

presupposed as naturally separate from and contradictory of each other. The Christian theology, instead of becoming, as the Christ-ideal revealed it, the symbol of a possible spiritual unity between God and man, became rather the expression of a unity which only overcame by an artificial logic a latent and essential difference. The unity was only a dogmatic one, while the difference was considered a real one. For the reconciliation was not conceived of as one of spirit, in which the divine and human could receive each other without either losing its essential character, and indeed only together perfecting the character of each in the other; that is, the reconciliation in the Christ-life, instead of being regarded not only as possible but essential to the nature of these from within, was regarded as a reconciliation entirely gratuitous and external. Thus all religious faith was directed in a blind manner to obtain for the individual from without that union with God which was denied from within — an artificial reconciliation which, of course, could not for ever satisfy the yearnings of humanity.

Its ultimate faith will rest in the spiritual and organic unity of God and man in the Christ-life, and not in a theology which set itself to bridge an irreconcilable difference between them.

The course of modern religious thought may be described fairly enough as an endeavour in the church to restore this ideal of the free and spiritual unity of the Christ-life, to break down the abstract opposition between God and man, and base again the world-system on the inherent oneness of the principle that permeates and sustains the whole. What the ideal needed at the hands of theology was not less, but more, rationalising,—the bringing out more fully of its own implicit relation to the rational universe, and the developing from within the spiritual unity which it implied for the world. For the restoration of the ideal does not mean only the restoration of a forgotten dogmatic truth, or a form of sound words: it implies the restoration of an attitude of mind—the mind of Christ. It is this attitude of the Christ-mind and Christ-life to the universe

of God which is the Christian ideal, and the ideal of humanity for all time. If Christian theology is to be in some form a statement of this life and spirit, it must be not merely a dogmatic statement of formal truth, stationary and complete in itself from the beginning,—it must represent the growth of a spirit which in its development gathers all the life and thought of humanity to fulfil its ideal. The life and character and spirit of Christ represent something that cannot be engraven on tables of stone, to be preserved like a law in the tabernacle of the church. It is a living ideal and a prophecy, something which can only be preserved in the life of the church, and which goes on increasing in breadth and complexity as the world's history advances—something which is daily realising itself more fully in changing but ever more adequate forms, and reproducing itself in the heart of humanity with a wider and more comprehensive meaning. The Christ-life reproduces itself as the ideal of every age, for it belongs not to one age but to humanity itself. It must gather up all

that has been or can be in the growth of human nature as its own; and the prophecy must come gradually towards its fulfilment, in taking a wider world into its grasp, and finding the whole universe becoming part of its truth.

It may be said that the religious achievement of the modern church has been the restatement of the Christian truth, not as an abstract doctrine, but as a living ideal. In itself Christianity is never antiquated, but is the eternal truth of human life; nevertheless, its interpretation by tradition in the church has not in every age been in an adequate form to meet and solve the problems of the time. The abstract and doctrinal form in which it has been handed down to us is confessedly one that belongs to an age entirely removed from the conditions of the life and thought of our own times, and unsuited to answer the questions that we are now forced to ask. But a system of thought often finds the problems of a new age insoluble only until it meets them with its own solution cast in a new shape; for when the thought

of a past age is restated, another answer to the problem appears possible. The new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved. This modern restatement of the Christian truth has come about from many influences, but chiefly from this, that men more fully realise now that the religion of Jesus is not merely a mechanical arrangement in the spiritual sphere, but the continual development of a spiritual ideal, and that it is not a mere formula of faith, but a truth of life and thought alike. It has come back again to men of this age, more than ever it has to any but the disciples, as something 'inner'; but the appeal of this inwardness is not now to faith, but rather to thought. It may be said that men recognise more adequately to-day the meaning of the appeal of that law of the spirit of life in Christ which makes them free from the law of sin and death.

This is of course but the expression in the religious sphere of the universal movement of modern thought and feeling. Modern thought has passed away almost entirely

from all external explanations of the world and human life, whether in the sphere of science or art or religion, and has come gradually to find the deeper fact of all life in the inner ideal to which it tends, by which it is related to all else, and of which the outer form is but the temporary and progressive expression. This transition, from the value of external arrangement to the higher value of inner tendency, is most evident in the great modern view of the evolution of life. For the explanation of any actual form of life and any stage of the world's progress is, in such a view, not to be found in itself, but rather in what the form of life or stage of progress represents of the past, and what it prophesies of the future. Nothing, in such a view, stands alone, or is fixed and final in itself, but is only a stage in the evolution of nature's ideal, to which the whole creation moves. Nothing has been made for itself alone, but only as a higher form from a lower, still progressing to something higher than itself, even if it pass away in giving birth to it. Nothing

can be explained from without, but only in the tendency of its future growth and in the reminiscence of its past development. Nature is to be interpreted, not so much by her outward accomplished work, as by her inward aims and tendencies—that is, by observing the gradual development of her ideal as it gathers up into itself the passing forms of creation.

The same spirit took hold of the Poetry and Art of modern times at the beginning of the century; and the whole tendency of these now is to represent the 'inwardness' of nature—that is, the value of her meanest forms in their relation to the whole, and the spirituality of common things because of the larger ideal of which they are a part. Modern poetry and art do not judge anything so much for what it is as for its 'expressiveness,' for that beauty of rational meaning which it receives from its relation to the universe. In Morality, also, the standard of conduct has been taken from without and transferred to the consciousness of an ideal self; it is no longer law or punishment or reward which

rules the moral life, but the thought of an end and aim which is gradually being perfected from within, and which man recognises as the ultimate good of life. Morality does not seek its sanction in external or traditional law, but in the obligation of a life which is recognised as spiritual and self-determining; and the value of moral virtues has been transferred from the conception of a future reward, to reliance on them as the standard in life of what is infinite and absolute, to the certainty they give us of a righteous universe as the ground of our moral actions. They are the basis of our faith in that universal self which is the final ideal of life. In Religion the same tendency is seen, in the passing away of abstract theories and logical deductions as the ground of a living faith; the passing away of the conception of separate and irreconcilable natures in the universe, of external and mechanical forms of revelation, and of an unreal and fictitious humanity incapable of moral good in itself. Instead of these has arisen the idea of a universe which is in all its forms the expression of

one principle, and that principle a spiritual one; the idea therefore of a spiritual development from within, both in the world and in man; the idea of the value of character; of the need of moral ideas behind doctrinal truths; and of the union of life and belief, conduct and creed, as evidence of Christian faith. The ideal nature of Christian truth is emphasised now in the essential thought of the 'body' of Christ, in the unity of one man with another, and the necessity of social relations for the perfection of the religious life. A man saves himself only in so far as he saves others. The interpretation of the divine will is permitted now in the intellectual sphere as well as in the spiritual; though not so much according to the subtlety of Schoolmen as in acquaintance with the universal reason latent in the mind of Christ. If we have learned to understand the Christ-ideal, then we shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.

Even in the region of the simplest Faith where the Cross of Christ remains the eternal truth, where still He is lifted up and draws

all men unto Him, even here the simplicity of ages is perhaps being altered, and pious faith is beginning to seek more than mere salvation. Almost insensibly a deeper value is being put by simple hearts on the beauty and saving power of the life and character of Christ than on a statutory redemption by substitution. In the most evangelical churches the appeal has gradually been changed, and the old note is awanting. That is one of the modern aspects of religion that has grown simply with the growth of the modern spirit, apart from any definite intention—the aspect which gives value to a spiritual character in itself, and value to such a character for the salvation of men. This is the heart of the modern movement; but it is only the Christian ideal coming to itself, and the original spiritual appeal of Jesus taking a new and deeper root. For the simple faith of a former age, though always present in the human heart, has been transformed and enriched by the infusion of the ideas and thoughts of modern times.

What all unconscious faith chiefly pre-

supposes is, the separate individual life, with a separate unity of its own, and a specially reserved relation with God. But such religious faith, even if in name still self-centred and complete in self, even still unconscious of everything but the individual soul and God, nevertheless cannot remain the same religion in reality, at a time when the old idea of a special existence for man in the world, and a separate relation with God, is being broken through; when individual personality is now no longer described as a definite portion of spiritual life locked up in different human bodies, but is felt to be composed of infinite spiritual and natural relations,—for, though still incomplete, yet touching the world at a hundred points, it is not in any one individual to be separately satisfied. Man as a rational being is gradually finding himself an integral part of a living and rational universe; and no religious reconciliation can any longer satisfy the problems of his life which does not likewise satisfy the problems of the universe. He cannot now be saved alone; he wills

not to be saved alone. He cannot accept a religious relation with God which demands the sacrifice of his rational relation with the world. The whole universe stands or falls together; the problem of the life of man is the problem of the universe, and the salvation of the soul of man must imply the justification of the universe. The concrete unity, therefore, which is found for the simple faith of the individual in the life of Jesus, and which by degrees is becoming even for simple faith something more than the vehicle of an external salvation, must become for the conscious thought of modern times the latent unity for the universe. That is, the unity which satisfies faith and religion, in their unconscious and unquestioning piety, must become a reconciliation which is established also in reason and in thought. The harmony of the religious life must become also the harmony of the rational life.

If the effort to rationalise the Christ-ideal in the early ages of the church failed, it failed chiefly through the application of a wrong method. And such an effort is

attempted in the modern church not at all in the way of a formal logical statement, or of forcing the spirit of Christianity under alien philosophical categories, but rather with the desire to understand the Christian truth in its relation to the truth of a rational universe, to find it true because the expression of a rational development in the world's history, and not only because consistent with the rules of logical theory. The Christ-ideal, indeed, is studied no longer now as the great exception which has to be accounted for in the history of man; for such a view of irreconcilable opposition between God and man, which so long forced an artificial unity upon religion, has been tried in the history of the church and found wanting. But rather the divine revelation in Christ is to be regarded as the ultimate revelation, on its religious side, of that divine spirit which moves at the heart of the universe. But if, on the one hand, a reconciliation from without that implies such an opposition is an inadmissible one, so also, on the other, is a unity by which in the

spirit of a religious mysticism, unrelated to the realities of life altogether, the difference between God and man is overcome in an undefined emotional fusion, and the real and distinct personality of both is lost. For this is a unity which rests only on feeling, and which in its wider relations becomes a form of pantheism, and merges divine and human in an unconscious identity.

The only unity which will satisfy the demands of religious thought is, that the divine spirit is immanent in all creation as a potentiality of divine life, but in man is present in an independent and self-conscious mind; that everything is a manifestation of God, and consciously or unconsciously is seeking its true life in that ideal with which his spirit has inspired it; that everything can be understood only as it is seen in Him, the part in the whole, the actual in the ideal; that therefore there is no opposition in the world which does not bear within itself the elements of a reconciliation, and that the final reconciliation of the world-problem in God will be in reality the return of God to

himself through the very world which He has created, and the completion of the divine life which cannot in itself be perfect apart from the world. This simply means that modern religious thought has now grasped fully the true nature of God as Spirit. God is conceived of no longer as spirit in the sense of the isolated 'I AM' of the Hebrew faith, for spirit cannot know isolation, but is a nature which can only be expressed in terms of unity and reconciliation. For spirit is that which finds nothing alien to itself, and is limited in its development by no external barriers, but continually reconciles to its advance even those things that seem to oppose it, and proves itself the true and perfect Infinite in proportion as it takes up into its divine life the finite world that seems to contradict it.

But the Christian faith lends its whole weight to this very belief that all things are the manifestation of one divine spirit, and that both outer and inner worlds are but different aspects of one principle; for it asserts spiritual relations of all natural phenomena, and dis-

covers a moral purpose ruling in all the events and even misfortunes of life. It lends its full weight to the belief in the immanence of God in the world of humanity; for it defines His relation to man under the ideal of Fatherhood, which implies such a spiritual communion that father and child live in each other. And it lends its full weight to the conception of spirit in the divine nature, as that which passes beyond itself only to return with a richer life from the world; for, in the great doctrine of love and of forgiveness, it implies from the beginning some reciprocal relation between God and man which, even in sin, can again reconcile them; it implies that their final and permanent union will lie in that spiritual character common to both, for this enables man not only to comprehend but to trust God, and allows the deity to satisfy the divine love in a free spiritual relationship with man. The divine regulation of the world, therefore, and the appearance of the divine spirit in man, are not to be regarded as an interference with the course of the world or with man's nature from without, but as the slow evolution in the

world of the divine thought within it, by which it becomes apparent and self-conscious. This constitutes at once both the freedom and the necessity of the world—the freedom on the one hand of that divine spirit which determines its own development from within, but from whose movement, on the other, the world cannot escape, because the world is itself a form of the divine life, and can find its fulfilment in God alone. But this immanence of God in the universe, this continuity between the outer world and the inner spirit, this latent possibility of the reconciliation of all in God, is only the rational expression of the religious truth gained and revealed in the attitude of the Christ-life: it returns to us thus not only as an intuition of faith, but as a truth of reason as well; and not as the truth of an individual life only, but the ultimate truth of the universe.

If, therefore, what we may call the modern restoration of the ideal needs for the simple religious faith of all ages only the recalling of the first true ideal of faith, the Christ himself, instead of the church doctrines which

have usurped its place—yet Christianity in its widest and fullest meaning cannot always be expressed in such simple terms, nor be adequately comprehended as a matter of individual feeling. The religious consciousness is a thinking consciousness; and a subjective emotion cannot satisfy all minds. The restoration of the ideal, therefore, for the modern church in an age of reflection rather than of simple faith, lies in the power of the religious consciousness to 'think' the original intuition of faith, and to give it the universality of thought. This means more than simply to think out the contents of the ideal in a logical order, as the early church did, or make a statement of Christian truth in more or less scientific terms. Thought does not mean only analysis, or deduction, or orderly arrangement. To 'think' the Christian ideal is to give its truth a form which appeals not only to the pious faith of man, but to man as a thinking being: it is to set it in its place as part of the spiritual world-order; to recognise it in the spiritual sphere as the religious counterpart of a rational universe. The essence of that ideal in its rela-

tion to thought thus becomes the idea of the immanence of God in all creation, revealing on the one hand the essential spirituality of material forms, and on the other the necessity of finite conditions for the manifestation of the infinite and the fulfilment of the divine life. It means that man cannot know the truth of the finite until it is interpreted as an expression of the infinite spirit; and, again, that the infinite cannot realise itself for us except under finite forms. There is no abstract Infinite. There is no isolated Deity. There is no religion which divides life and reason. Rather the hope of religion lies in this very certainty, that the finite contains in itself the elements of that infinite which we seek; and that the Christ-life, instead of being an exception to this faith, is its very goal and victory.

The first truth of religion is almost an unconscious one, an intuition of faith; the last truth is a conscious one, a reasoned faith. To our first faith the truth of religion appears as the great exception of life, the mystery and anomaly of life; to our last faith religion becomes the reasonable truth of life, the divine